

To suffice to herself: female self-sufficiency in the work of women writers 1740-1814

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PhD Thesis

**‘To suffice to herself’: Female Self-sufficiency in the
Work of Women Writers 1740-1814**

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Abstract

This thesis takes as its focus the concept of self-sufficiency in the works of women writers 1740-1814, in order to re-evaluate the relationship between moral and economic modes of eighteenth-century female (in)dependence. This focus comprises two more refined aims: to formulate an appropriate methodology for using the term self-sufficiency within the project by establishing its definitions and applications, both contemporary and modern (addressing, in effect, whether it can be said to establish its own discourse); and to discuss a range of work by female writers whose thematic and strategic investigation of moral and economic issues positions the nature of female self-sufficiency amongst their concerns. As part of this, the thesis seeks a broader definition of female economic behaviour than has been the case in recent critical debates in order to reconsider women's presence as economic beings in the fiction of the period.

Sarah Fielding's works are discussed in terms of her fascination with exchange motifs and how this is manifested in her management of narrative forms to structure moral and economic models of self-sufficiency. The work of Frances Brooke is used to explore the implications of self-sufficiency in a range of sexual and economic categories of femininity: the spinster, the widow, the coquette and the female writer. An investigation of Frances Sheridan's novels is concerned with the relationship between individual morality and the collective values, together with the processes of acculturation, structured by female education and conduct procedures. It evaluates how the self-sufficiency of the personal economy engages with wider economies – moral, domestic and political. A fourth chapter on Frances Burney examines her sustained preoccupation with the concept of female self-dependence, and with the nature of female employment. These investigations suggest that only by encompassing non-monetary economies can the nature and scope of eighteenth-century women's economic experiences be determined.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Markman Ellis.

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Introduction

The term ‘self-sufficiency’ enjoys a certain prestige in our present age. Certainly it has a characteristically modern resonance in its denoting of economic competence; of the ability and willing responsibility to rely on one’s own resources in conducting one’s economic life. At the same time, it indicates reliance on individual, highly personal resources of a psychological, emotional, social and moral nature. Once conjuring up images of small-holdings, and related technologies of self-supporting food and energy production, it now encompasses a wider nexus of meanings, suggesting independence, self-reliance, autonomy and confidence in oneself, with these meanings structured across a range of different registers and dimensions.

In the eighteenth century, and covering the period with which my study is concerned, the term ‘self-sufficiency’ was used in a pejorative sense. Dr Johnson in his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) takes note that ‘sufficiency’ is ‘used by Temple for that conceit which makes a man think himself equal to things above him: and is commonly compounded with *self*’.¹ To be self-sufficient in the eighteenth century was to be arrogant; too readily satisfied with oneself and one’s opinions; and unwilling to look beyond the self to acknowledge the beneficial, reciprocal value of social interaction and communal knowledge. It also meant an assertion of self over an acknowledged dependence on God.²

One of the concerns of this introductory section is to establish how eighteenth-century and modern formulations of self-sufficiency are to be positioned for the purposes of my study. To this end, I include a discussion of definitions of

¹ Dr Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London, 1755).

² The titles of two contemporary sermons illustrate the point. T.I. Twistleton, in 1801, published the pithily titled ‘Self-Sufficiency Incompatible with Christianity, A Sermon’. Fifteen years earlier, in 1786, the unattributed ‘Let him, that thinketh he standeth, take Heed lest he fall: or the Danger of Self-sufficiency in Matters of Religion, A Sermon’ was published.

‘self-sufficiency’ and its cognates, drawn from contemporary dictionaries. Whilst ‘self-sufficiency’ itself may have been a pejorative term, other compounds of ‘self’, such as ‘self-control’ and ‘self-dependence’, have an established presence in contemporary discourses associated with women or identified as ‘feminine’, including educational and conduct literatures, and the novel. More particularly, in those discourses’ structuring of debates about the nature of women’s moral and economic behaviour, the concept of self-sufficiency is inherently present in determining – and contesting – the ideological scope the debates seek to establish.

However, my main line of approach over the course of this study is to use the modern formulation of self-sufficiency in my examination of women’s novels in the period 1740-1814.³ Given the interplay between the moral and economic dimensions of self-sufficiency in its modern formulation, this suggests a distinct space for considering modes of female behaviour and experience in the eighteenth century, both as they were manifested by women themselves and as they were modelled by female writers in their work.

To place these ideas more fully within their relevant contexts, this Introduction falls into several sections. I begin by looking in more detail at the meanings of self-sufficiency, its formulations and applications. I next consider some of the literary, cultural and economic contexts within which female self-sufficiency and its discursive representation can be situated. This includes some preliminary discussion of how the concept establishes a presence in contemporary literature; an overview of some relevant cultural models (the self, femininity, domesticity); and finally, a consideration of the contemporary economic structures within which female experience is to be understood. Following this, I present a

³ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, Volume XIV, defines ‘self-sufficiency’ as ‘The quality or condition of being self-sufficient’, that is ‘Sufficient in or for oneself (itself) without aid or support from outside; able to supply one’s needs oneself’.

more precise account of the methodology for my study, and a chapter-by-chapter outline, indicating the writers included, materials used and the main areas of discussion. Thus, in tabulated form, this Introduction seeks to cover the following:

1. Self sufficiency: its meanings and uses
2. Self-sufficiency in context:
 - i) The literary context
 - ii) The cultural context
 - iii) The economic context
3. Methodology and outline of the thesis

1. Self-sufficiency: its meanings and uses

Dictionaries in the eighteenth century rarely present ‘self-sufficiency’ in its compound form (‘self’ with ‘sufficiency’), although contemporary literature testifies that the term was in common usage. More typically we have to look at ‘self’ and ‘sufficiency’ under separate entries in order to sense the expression’s meanings in compound terms. Bailey’s *Universal Etymological English Dictionary* of 1721, which is characterized by its conciseness, defines ‘self’ with the entry ‘as one self’; while ‘sufficiency’ produces two main registers of definition: ‘Ability’ and ‘Capacity’ on the one hand; ‘Pride or Presumption’ on the other.⁴

To focus on ‘sufficiency’, the term undergoes some expansion and refinement in other, later dictionaries. Thus, Thomas Dyche in his *A New General English Dictionary* of 1735 (under ‘sufficient’) defines it as ‘Enough, that satisfies

⁴ Nathan Bailey, *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (London, 1721). This was the standard dictionary in the eighteenth century and went into numerous editions (26 by 1789).

the Necessities, or that is able, or capable of doing, performing or suffering’;⁵ while Frederick Barlow in *A Complete English Dictionary* of 1772 defines ‘sufficiency’ as ‘the state of being equal to the end proposed. A qualification for any purpose. Supply equal to want, or competence’. He concludes his entry with one further meaning: ‘Conceit’. Barlow’s definitions, in both registers of meaning, are almost identical to Dr Johnson’s in his *Dictionary of the English Language*, first published some seventeen years earlier (in 1755).⁶ Johnson uses the compound form ‘self-sufficiency’ both in his definitional material and in the examples he characteristically cites to establish usage. His quotation from Temple, who is also cited by Bailey, indicates that ‘*Sufficiency* is a compound of vanity and ignorance’. In addition Johnson produces material referencing ‘self-sufficiency’ under his entry for ‘self’ in order to illustrate the pronoun’s functions in compound form. He quotes from Addison here: ‘Self-sufficiency proceeds from inexperience’.

In summary, whilst eighteenth-century dictionaries spend little time defining ‘self’, ‘sufficiency’ and its cognates – ‘suffice’, ‘sufficient’ – attract more attention and produce definitions that are descriptive on the one hand, but which imply a morally prescriptive stance on the other. Whilst denoting adequacy, competency and capability, ‘sufficiency’, when compounded with ‘self’, enters a different register, one characterized as morally negative. This reminds us of its presence as a pejorative term in the eighteenth century; but it also indicates that we need to draw a distinction between usage and concept here. In other words, we need to ask whether ‘self-sufficiency’ (as we might understand it in its modern formulation) was conceptually present as a form of moral and economic behaviour in the

⁵ Thomas Dyche, finished by William Pardon, *A New General English Dictionary* (London: 1735). Dyche, whilst including entries under ‘suffice’, ‘sufficient’ and ‘sufficiency’, does not specify a pejorative usage.

⁶ Frederick Barlow, *A Complete English Dictionary* (London: 1772). Barlow changes a word here and there, but the definitions are essentially the same.

eighteenth century, but under a different name. In order to do this, we need to address the question of how self-sufficiency establishes a presence in eighteenth-century discourses, and what the nature of that presence is. It is necessary, therefore, to establish some contexts for further considering this point.

2. Self-sufficiency in Context

i) The literary context

As the title of J. Paul Hunter's 1990 study *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century Fiction* suggests, the presence of existing, and the emergence of new, literary forms in the eighteenth century require placing in context in order to elicit their significance as cultural and historical phenomena.⁷ To a large extent, this enterprise is characterized by its desire to account for the emergence of the novel as a new and dominant literary form in this period. A contemporary critical impetus to theorize the form and role of the novel, together with its fictional scope, emerged with the form itself, and revealed intellectual curiosity alongside moral concern. In more recent times, Ian Watt is widely agreed to have been the first to produce a convincing account of the social and historical conditions that gave rise to the form in his 1957 work, *The Rise of the Novel*.⁸ Subsequent commentators, such as Hunter, and in a more combative sense Michael McKeon and Lennard J. Davis, have refined Watt's work by arguing for the influence of non-fictional cultural traditions (Hunter), origins and pre-existence

⁷ J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990).

⁸ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel; Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1987 [first published 1957]).

(McKeon) and the taxonomies of discourse (Davis) in establishing an account of the novel in the eighteenth century.⁹

A separate, but complementary, strand of (largely feminist) criticism has simultaneously addressed the crucial question of women's roles in the production and consumption of the novel in eighteenth-century England. While Dale Spender's project in *Mothers of the Novel* (1986) is to contest the chauvinism of a male (and male formulated) literary canon by uncovering a hundred women writers active in the eighteenth century, Jane Spencer in *The Rise of the Woman Novelist* (1986) and Cheryl Turner in *Living by the Pen* (1992) produce valuable accounts of the professional woman writer. Spencer's focus on the ideology of womanhood addresses the authority and self-authorizing strategies of women's writing, while Turner's work is concerned with the position of women writers in the literary marketplace. Both critics address the social, cultural and economic forces affecting women, both historically and (particularly Spencer) in terms of the impact this had on the representation of female experience within the novel. This last, as I will show, is particularly relevant to my own study.¹⁰

The eighteenth-century literary context, then, was a complex one in which the emergent novel form positioned itself amidst a diversity of existent texts, modes, forms and concepts, where it elicited, provoked and contested expectations and requirements. The formation of a readership, the contributory presence of women, the feminizing of literary discourse, the jostling for position in the hierarchy of literary prestige, and the conceptual challenge of determining the

⁹ See Lennard Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) and Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (London: Radius, 1988).

¹⁰ Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers Before Jane Austen* (London: Pandora, 1986); Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

novel's mimetic and moral functions were all anxieties present in contemporary response to the evolving literary context, as they are issues addressed by the modern commentators named above. In the latter case, by theorizing retrospectively, additional discourses are introduced as casting light on these issues. Catherine Gallagher's *Nobody's Story* (1995) takes a discursive approach to textuality within a consumer culture, while Liz Bellamy's *Commerce, Morality and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (1998) argues that economic discourse provided an analytical perspective from which the novel's technologies of representation – and the debates this stimulated concerning its moral function – derived. Before either of these, Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987) introduced gender into Foucauldian concepts of discourse and power in order to read the rise of the domestic woman in terms of a set of cultural symbols that observe no distinction between text and context.¹¹

Alongside this impetus to account for the novel historically, there is a clearly articulated sense that new conceptions of prose narrative offered new conceptions of representational and organizational literary practice. An increasing interest in individuality and what it is like to be an individual is reflected in the novel's scope for exploring the private subjectivities of the characters it depicts.¹² The imaginative potential of the inner life and the articulation of a private and privileged morality are part of this. It was precisely this mode of portraying human experience and behaviour – namely, one that applied literary imagination to a mimetic endeavour – that saw increasing concerns about the moral responsibilities

¹¹ Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Act of Women Writers in the Marketplace 1670-1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1994); Liz Bellamy, *Commerce, Morality and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹² I say more about eighteenth-century conceptions of the self in the next section.

of novelist and reader alike.¹³ An irresponsibly conceived novel could produce undesirable effects (often construed in sexual terms) in its readers; whilst a morally exemplary work, by contrast, would have positive effects. Since the emphasis on privacy and subjectivity was perceived as feminizing the novel as a mode of literary expression, women writers (and readers) were particularly implicated in this process. The articulation of respectability in prefatory and fictional materials is a prevalent feature of women's novels in this period.

Before refining these contextualizing remarks in line with my own study's focus on the work of female writers, it is worth considering how the novel as a feminized – or domestic – discourse responded to these influences in terms of its selection and organization of the resources of fiction writing; that is the themes, modes, strategies and techniques by which they were rendered in fictive terms.¹⁴ Not surprisingly for a new form, the eighteenth-century novel is often self-consciously aware of its own innovations and methodologies. Novels such as Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67) and many of Sarah Fielding's prose fictions (1744-60) reflect this. It might seem reductive, therefore, to suggest the evolving of a typical novel as being female-authored, concerned with a main (female) character, 'domesticated' in the sense that its focus is on interior, private experience and spaces, and thematically engaged with modes of moral and sexual conduct within a framework of courtship and marriage. Yet many novels display these characteristics, suggesting an emergent sense of a recognizable set of conventions and techniques. What is of interest is

¹³ Hunter addresses the issue of didacticism in eighteenth-century literature (including the novel) in *Before Novels*. See pp.225-302.

¹⁴ Hunter offers a checklist of features that 'characterize the species' (the novel) in *Before Novels*. See pp.23-25.

how individual writers negotiated these features – the resources of fiction writing – and to what ends.

Recently, literary critics and historians have addressed this by focusing on the novel as a domestic discourse, which processes subjectivity, privacy, empathy and sentiment, in order to consider two main questions: how writers of eighteenth-century fiction accommodated themes and modes ideologically inimical to such a discourse; and how the novel can be situated in relation to other, possibly competing, discourses. Of particular interest to my own study is the focus this has yielded on economic writings and structures, as Liz Bellamy's account has shown. Her work and that of Gillian Skinner (1998), in which Skinner shows the simultaneity of economic and sentimental discourse in the novel's representation of individual experience, offer productive responses to works such as Mona Scheuermann's descriptive account of female economic ability in *Her Bread to Earn* (1993) and James Thompson's argument using the separate spheres model, that domestic and economic discourses only meet in a spirit of mutual transgression (*Models of Value*, 1996).¹⁵ It is within this context of the novel's capacity for representing both the moral and the economic – and within its sense of itself as a space, imaginatively and technically resourced, for representing individual behaviours – that I position the concept of self-sufficiency. The extent to which this concept can be modelled in a literary sense (that is, represented in narrative), and in relation to the literary contexts outlined here, is considered below.

¹⁵ Mona Scheuermann, *Her Bread to Earn: Women, Money and Society from Defoe to Austen* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993); Gillian Skinner, *Sensibility and Economics in the Novel, 1740-1800*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999); James Thompson, *Models of Value: Eighteenth-Century Political Economy and the Novel* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996). The separate spheres model is drawn from the work of Jürgen Habermas (notably *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 1962) and has proved influential and controversial in equal measure. It is increasingly contested as being too limited – and limiting – in its separation of the public and the private.

When Frances Burney refers to the heroine of her 1814 novel, *The Wanderer*, as a ‘female Robinson Crusoe’, she is making a deliberate and resonant link to one of the earliest exponents of self-sufficiency in English prose fiction.¹⁶ Defoe’s Crusoe (1719) famously has to supply all his survival needs – food, clothing, shelter – from his own resources (and resourcefulness) once he is stranded on his island. This involves a revision of what is needed for subsistence, for only what can be put to practical use is of value to Crusoe. Money, by this reckoning, becomes ‘nasty sorry useless stuff’.¹⁷ This early literary modelling of self-sufficiency emphasizes the individual’s economic behaviour *in extremis* without losing sight of the wider economic systems that inform it.¹⁸ Defoe’s later, female protagonists, such as Moll Flanders (1722) and Roxana (1724), play out different versions of this, articulating their self-sufficient quest for economic survival in terms of the economic conditions by which they see themselves shaped. By drawing on the Crusoe model to suggest her own protagonist’s self-sufficient endeavour, Burney’s novel demonstrates the form’s sustained engagement with representing the economic dimension of human experience.

Yet, in the hundred years or so that divided Burney’s last work of fiction from Defoe’s first, many changes had occurred in the modes and tones of literary representation. The influence of cultural trends such as domesticity and sensibility (see next section) and the increasing prevalence of the novel of sentiment produced a more consciously gendered approach to novelistic content and style. Burney’s ‘Robinson Crusoe’, in the person of Juliet Granville, may have changed sex, but she is also construed in a very different tonal register. The morally virtuous woman of

¹⁶ Frances Burney, *The Wanderer, or Female Difficulties* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press (World’s Classics), 1991), p.873.

¹⁷ Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), p.140.

¹⁸ Liz Bellamy makes this point, *Commerce*, p.69. See also Maximilian E. Novak, *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1975), Chapter III.

feeling, who prefers domestic privacy to public display, became the novel's dominant model of femininity from at least the mid-eighteenth century onwards. The novels of Samuel Richardson gave this model pre-eminence, though his interest in exploring things from the woman's point of view ensured that a texture of independent thought and action was possible in the way his female characters were portrayed. Thus, Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-49) has been seen as a model of female self-sufficiency, financially and intellectually independent, and with a finely-tuned moral sense of self.¹⁹ Both *Pamela* (1740) and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-54) explore themes of women's moral and domestic conduct, incorporating debates about male-female relations (in both courtship and marriage), household management and moral self-regulation.

Whilst these were the themes with which the novel of sentiment primarily concerned itself, I argue here that female writers from the 1740s onwards seized the newly available modes of literary representation to articulate a more robustly inclusive response to representing women's experience. Without aspiring to the overtly politicized version of female independence emergent in novels of the 1790s by authors such as Elizabeth Inchbald, Mary Hays and Mary Wollstonecraft, the writers included in this study nevertheless asserted women's self-sufficient capabilities. Thus, far from eschewing the depiction of economic behaviour, these writers actively positioned it alongside behaviour in the moral dimension. It is in the interplay between these two dimensions, the economic and the moral, that the literary modelling of self-sufficiency becomes visible.

¹⁹ See Frederick Garber, *The Autonomy of the Self from Richardson to Huysmans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), Chapter One, pp.3-32.

ii) The cultural context

The positioning of women within the moral and domestic economies requires a consideration of cultural notions of gender difference and the gendering of self in the eighteenth century. The conceptualizing of the self was an abiding metaphysical challenge to philosophical writers such as Locke, Shaftesbury, Hume and Smith. As Stephen D. Cox points out in *"The Stranger Within Thee"* (1980), the very pursuit of a viable concept of self ironically serves to confirm just how elusive the "stranger" is.²⁰ Locke's hugely influential *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690, Second edition 1694) set the broad scope of the succeeding century's debates about the nature of personal identity. Locke's empiricist response to the question of how, why (and if) identity remains consistent over time posits the role of consciousness (memory and perceptions) as the crucial factor. But the problem of how the individual experiences the outside world – whether, as Hume explored it in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), the self or the perceptions determine the nature of experience; and of the extent to which the self is autonomous or relational in a societal sense, continued to be debated.²¹

A recurrent element in these debates was the question of personal significance and how this was refined in terms of the individual's moral identity. Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks* (1711), for example, concerned itself with the individual's instinctive ability to distinguish between right and wrong, a capacity

²⁰ Stephen D. Cox, *"The Stranger Within Thee": Concepts of the Self in Late-Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980). Chapter Two, 'Eighteenth-Century Philosophies of the Self', pp. 13-24 has been particularly useful for this section. See also Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and C. Fred Alford, *The Self in Social Theory* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991).

²¹ Illustrative of the persistence of these debates is Felicity Nussbaum's comment in *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989) that the terms they contested were already redundant by the end of the seventeenth century. See p.38. Arnold Weinstein in *Fictions of the Self, 1550-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) sees the debate as a productive one for eighteenth-century novels, where the quest for personal self-sufficiency is depicted in the context of social constraint and contingency. See his Preface, p.vii.

which he calls the moral sense. Since this identifies the individual's good with the good of society, Shaftesbury's is clearly a relational theory of moral identity. Cox has argued that such determination of the self's moral significance – and the problems this posed eighteenth-century philosophers in reconciling perceptual and relational theories – has to take the concept of sensibility into account.²² Hume's systematizing of sympathy in *A Treatise of Human Nature* suggests a validation of self through dependence on society. This was more thoroughly addressed by Adam Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), where Smith argues that the self remains individual in terms of perception, but closely related to society in terms of sentiments. The moral self and its significance are known through a process of internalizing the sentiments of others; a process which also produces the self's moral autonomy.²³

It is interesting to recall here the pejorative eighteenth-century meaning of self-sufficiency as indicating the self's arrogant rejection of social dependence. It reminds us of the need to apply a more consciously modern usage of the term in considering, for example, Smith's theory that moral self-sufficiency is achieved relationally. The distinction is also important in considering the Lockean empiricist conceptualizing of the self as rational and responsible, where personal identity as consciousness produces moral self-awareness and self-control. In her 1759 novel *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn*, Sarah Fielding writes of the morally inconsistent heroine that she was 'so totally changed, that it would have puzzled any of the Philosophers, who have written on the Subject of Identity, to have discovered whether or no she was the same Person'.²⁴ This Lockean formulation of

²² See Cox, pp.25-34. See also Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London and New York: Methuen, 1986) for her section on eighteenth-century moral philosophy and sensibility, pp.23-28.

²³ Cox, pp.29-33.

²⁴ Sarah Fielding, *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn*^{in 2 volumes} (London: A. Millar, 1759), (1.43).

moral identity is specifically addressed to the heroine's disrupted capacity for moral self-control and indicates how the conceptualizing of the self – and self-sufficiency – could be expressed as a literary enterprise involving the rendering of individual consciousness in fictive and narrative terms.

Fielding's comments, although applied to a female character, do not seek to gender the philosophical discourse of identity in terms of sexual difference. Nevertheless, the gendering of self was an important cultural move in the eighteenth century.²⁵ Locke (in *Second Treatise of Government*, 1690) was again influential, this time in his remodelling of the patriarchal family into contractual terms whereby each sex contributed distinctive qualities and abilities. Alongside the empiricist theory of perceptions, which does not explicitly posit gender difference, this inaugurated debates, protofeminist ones amongst them, about whether sexual difference was innate or the product of socialization. Although the debates were (and still are) inconclusive, there is no doubt that there were widespread cultural assumptions about gender difference in this period. The implications of this for women can be evaluated in physiological and psychological, as well as moral and economic terms.

The prevalent models of femininity in this period are constructed in terms of women's moral characteristics and domestic behaviour. Women were required to be chaste, modest, virtuous and obedient, ready to evince tenderness and compassion, but also capable of self-control. Although considered to be physically and mentally weaker than men, susceptible to their nerves and unsuited to sustained intellectual activity, women were nevertheless afforded an important and influential role in

²⁵ See Miriam J. Benkovitz, 'Some Observations on Woman's Concept of Self in the 18th Century' in Paul Fritz and Richard Morton, editors, *Woman in the 18th Century, and Other Essays* (Toronto and Sarasota: Hakkert & Co., 1976).

civilizing men and ordering relations within the private, domestic sphere.²⁶ The ideology of domesticity, along with its model of the ideal domestic woman, became increasingly dominant as the eighteenth century progressed.²⁷ This gendered self, with its assigned characteristics, can be encountered in prescriptive literature of the time (conduct books and educational treatises) which typically treat men and women as naturally different.²⁸ The advice directed at women insisted on their feminine virtues and responsible self-regulation. It also prepared them for their domestic roles as wives and mothers, which included the efficient management of a household. Thus, women were acculturated on gender lines into a set of practices and behaviours that were increasingly associated with a sphere designated as enclosed, domestic and private.

However, recent work by social historians warns us against a too ready acceptance of a male-public, female-private model of gender roles. Amanda Vickery in her important 1993 article 'Golden age or separate spheres?' and, more recently, in *The Gentleman's Daughter* (1998) contests this model on the grounds that, conceptually, it is neither specific nor flexible enough.²⁹ As she points out, the promulgation of a domestic ideology is not conclusive evidence that women were, in a practical, lived sense, domesticated.³⁰ Shoemaker also finds the model inadequate, arguing that eighteenth-century gender roles need to be considered in

²⁶ See Robert Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (London and New York: Longman, 1998), Chapter Two, 'Ideas about Gender', for the changing nature of gender roles in this period, including the influence of contemporary religious, biological and philosophical perspectives.

²⁷ See the Introduction to Vivien Jones, editor, *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), which discusses domestic ideology.

²⁸ For an overview of this see the Introduction to Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, editors, *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* (London and New York: Longman, 1997).

²⁹ Amanda Vickery, 'Golden age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history', *Historical Journal*, 36, 1993, pp.383-414; *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998). She also rejects the conceptual vocabulary associated with the model, p.13.

³⁰ Vickery, p.7.

terms of continuity and change, not as emergent and separate. This, together with his more inclusive reading of gender roles as behavioural rather than spatial, produces a broader perspective on women's (and men's) moral, sexual and economic behaviour.³¹

The conceptualizing, gendering and acculturation of the self all have important implications for the modelling of self-sufficiency. The notion of personal identity as relational places individual self-awareness and moral autonomy in the context of social interdependence. Perceptual and experiential modes of being occur within a moral economy which authorizes self-responsibility, mediated through attention to the sensibilities of others. The self-sufficiency this posits is rational, responsible and relational. But, if resituated from the philosophical to the more specifically cultural domain, such a formulation begins to yield paradoxical elements.

One example of this occurs in the gendering of self, which, as we have seen, required that women be adept in the specific duties and responsibilities assigned to them, whether these took the form of moral virtues or of practical skills. The ability to govern oneself within the prescribed modes of behaviour and to practise efficient management of the domestic space (household and people) was frequently designated as self-control and (self-) regulation in contemporary conduct literature. The paradox here lies in the suggestion that women had to be acculturated into such self-sufficient practices, an anomalous coinciding of ideas which can be expressed oxymoronically in the notion of a "prescriptive" self-sufficiency.

This raises the question of whether self-sufficiency established its own, culturally specific, discourse in contemporary writings affiliated with domesticity

³¹ Shoemaker, pp.305-18. Barker and Chalus also challenge separate spheres formulations by contesting the view that women played little part in public life. They argue instead for a flexible, fluid approach to gender roles, offering a historicized and revisionist reading.

and femininity. But it also asks, in turn, whether a resistance to such acculturation processes produced self-sufficient behaviour of a different type and tone. As Amanda Vickery has argued, the promulgation of a domestic ideology does not mean women conformed to its ideals in either a practical or an intellectual sense. It may be that women took a more consciously independent, even combative, line in response to cultural practices and ideologies and achieved a different mode of self-sufficiency in the process. It is useful, therefore, to consider two aspects of self-sufficiency – what might be termed a passive (or prescriptive) aspect and an active, more assertive, aspect. Both these aspects are taken into account in the chapters that follow this Introduction.

Of further interest here is the ideological evaluation of the domestic woman in terms of her skills as an economist. (Or ‘oeconomist’ as the eighteenth century typically spells it.) Although this might include the handling of a domestic budget and generally denoted efficiency and frugality, the term did not have the monetary associations it does now.³² Rather, it was used to describe organizational practices, with an ‘oeconomist’ being one who managed, arranged or ordered a household (most typically, although it was also applied to other spheres, such as anatomy, architecture, law and oratory).³³ Thus, for women, particular forms of economic behaviour were culturally authorized and, in ideological terms, were the sources of self-worth and moral significance. The presence of this female economist in eighteenth-century cultural formations invites a more flexible approach to conceptualizing economic structures and behaviours in this period – an approach which reflects both the moral or personal and the economic modes of self-

³² See next section for a full range of definitions.

³³ It was also used in moral philosophy. Bailey’s 1721 Dictionary notes ‘Oeconomicks’ as ‘a Part of Moral Philosophy which treats of the Management of the Passions’.

sufficiency. What these structures were and how they can be formulated as analytical models is the subject of the next section.

iii) The economic context

The economic history of eighteenth-century England might be characterized as one of sustained change, marked by increased commercialization, the rise of capitalism and the discrete impact of the Industrial Revolution.³⁴ Whilst historians have differed on the rate at which trades, manufactures and domestic and agrarian industries were affected by the technological and economic changes associated with industrialization and capitalization, recent historiography has emphasized a more emergent, less revolutionary model of economic change.³⁵ The roles of land, capital and labour were always present in determining the economic characteristics of earlier periods. What was different in the eighteenth century was the increasing shift to commerce as the measure of economic vitality, together with an emphasis on the market as the chief mechanism of economic organization.

These changes had a simultaneous impact on the household or family economy, which R.W. Malcolmson has described as ‘the central unit of production in the eighteenth century’.³⁶ This unit drew on the contribution of all its members, through income, labour and (re)production, to resource itself and, hence, ensure its

³⁴ Joel Mokyr in his editor’s introduction to *The British Industrial Revolution: An Economic Perspective*, Second Edition (Westview Press, 1999) identifies four main schools of thought in relation to the effects of the Industrial Revolution: the Social Change School; the Industrial Organization School; the Macroeconomic School and the Technological School. The nature of economic transactions, the rise of capitalist employment, the role of aggregate variables and the impact of technological advances characterize these respectively. See pp.7-8. See also Richard Brown’s comprehensive but accessible account of eighteenth-century economic history in *Society and Economy in Modern Britain 1700-1850* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991). He evaluates the four schools of thought, pp.251-52.

³⁵ Examples include T.S.Ashton, *An Economic History of England: The 18th Century* (London: Methuen, 1955), who was one of the earliest to take this line; and Eric Jones, *Growth Recurring: Economic Change in World History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

³⁶ R.W. Malcolmson, ‘Ways of Getting a Living in Eighteenth-Century England’ in R.E. Pahl, *On Work: Historical, Comparative and Theoretical Approaches* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp.48-60. This reference, p.49.

economic survival. It was therefore affected by changes in the wider economy. Two strands of historical investigation have attended the nature of this impact: the extent to which a separation of home and workplace occurred under industrial capitalism, and the implications of this for the sexual division of labour. I return to these issues below.

Alongside the eighteenth century's economic developments, a new discourse emerged which systematized the economic principles by which the developments were governed. This was the discourse of political economy, which Thompson defines as essentially a discourse of money (or monetary systems).³⁷ Figures such as Locke, Bernard Mandeville (*The Fable of the Bees*, 1714), Hume, Sir James Steuart (*An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy*, 1767) and Adam Smith (*An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 1776) all developed theories of political economy.³⁸ However, as Liz Bellamy has pointed out, although the second half of the eighteenth century was crucial in forming (modern) economic thought, there is a long pre-history of political economy.³⁹ Terence Hutchison in *Before Adam Smith* (1988) surveys the developments in thinking on money, wealth, trade and employment, including the development of political economy through mercantilist and free trade schools of thought.⁴⁰

One aspect of this process involved the question of how a discourse of morality should inform economic theory. The fact that eighteenth-century political economists, most notably Hume and Smith, were also moral philosophers suggests

³⁷ Thompson, *Models of Value*, p.41. Thompson sees the historical process by which money is refigured from treasure to capital as crucial in this. He argues that this prompted a crisis in the concept of value, which the discourse of political economy was attempting to work through.

³⁸ Sir James Steuart's was the first usage of the term 'political economy'.

³⁹ Bellamy, p.13.

⁴⁰ Terence Hutchison, *Before Adam Smith: The Emergence of Political Economy 1662-1776* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988).

the relatedness of the two discourses. It was the addition of the word ‘political’ that set the terms for a distinction, for ‘economy’ itself had its roots in moral philosophy, where, although it could have a political application, it was more typically deployed in an ethical sense. An early, classical model illustrates this. Aristotelian *oikonomia*, derived from *oikos* (private household) and *nomos* (management), posits ethical economic behaviour as the successful regulation of the household, with self-sufficiency not gain as the goal. Wealth and exchange were thus a means to attaining self-sufficiency and not ends in themselves. This applied equally to the state, so that the self-sufficient economy of the household was the same model as for the state as a whole.⁴¹ This is distinct from eighteenth-century political economy, although applying what Heinzelman has called an ‘Aristotelian synthesis’ helps to show why.⁴² When, in his 1767 work, Sir James Steuart defines political economy as being, in a state, what economy is in a family, he is making an implicit distinction between the political and the moral dimensions of economy. His definition of the dual role of the economist as law-maker (‘lord’) and law-implementer (‘steward’) further emphasizes this.⁴³ However, as Bellamy notes, what such contributors as Steuart to the new discourse were simultaneously revealing was ‘the inapplicability of classical morality to the realities of a capitalist economic system’.⁴⁴

In part this was due to the separate methodologies of the respective discourses and their reifying of terms of reference. Although earlier moral debates about, for example, luxury and consumption, which used ‘economy’ in the sense of

⁴¹ Kurt Heinzelman, *The Economics of the Imagination* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1980). See pp.38-42 where Heinzelman considers the relationship between *oikonomikē* (economic practice), *politikē* (political institutions) and *chrematistikē* (the art of accumulating wealth) in Aristotle’s writings.

⁴² Heinzelman, p.44.

⁴³ I have drawn on Heinzelman, p.44 for this point. See Volume I, Book 2 of Steuart’s *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy*.

⁴⁴ Bellamy, p.23.

‘frugality’ persisted throughout the period, under political economy the issue of consumption was treated mechanistically and by the application of economic precepts alone. Thus, there was a shift in the terms of analysis.⁴⁵ At the same time, there was a shift from a moral and public to a commercial and private definition of citizenship; the former being a moral economy based on non-market self-sufficiency and community, the latter a political economy based on market capitalism and the individual.⁴⁶ Both Mandeville and Smith, amongst others, debated the part played by self-interest in the commercial society. Smith showed how self-interest underpinned the self-regulating principles of the market economy. By entering into the processes of exchange, both the self-interested individual and society as a whole were benefited. The new order of social relations this entailed produced a private morality (as distinct from the public virtue associated with civic humanism) based on individual self-determination and an autonomous sense of self-worth.⁴⁷

The economic individual was invariably posited as male, but women’s moral and economic roles under capitalism demand attention too. Seen as the pivotal figure within the household economy – its ‘cornerstone’ as Tilly and Scott put it – under political economy, women established their presence largely in terms of their labour.⁴⁸ This could include work in agriculture, retail, domestic industry, domestic service and in factories and other industries. Since it also included work within the household (cooking, cleaning, tending livestock and so on) and since the distinction between labour as of use and labour as of exchange value was often

⁴⁵ Bellamy argues that ‘far from developing from the tradition of moral analysis, economics derives from an entirely different set of moral, social and epistemological premises’, p.37.

⁴⁶ See M.J. Daunton, ‘Moral Economy versus Political Economy?’ in *Progress and Poverty: An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1700-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995).

⁴⁷ Bellamy explores the challenge to the public virtue identified with civic humanism, pp.13-38.

⁴⁸ Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, *Women, Work and Family* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), p.60.

unclear, it has rightly been argued that we need a broader definition of work for women than for men in this period.⁴⁹

The political economy's formulation of labour as value thus has implications for women in terms of the sexual division of labour. Economic historians have long debated whether women lost out or gained ground as a result of industrial capitalism. The so-called 'pessimist' view argues that women were economically disadvantaged by the separation of home and workplace, the division of work by gender and the resultant de-skilling of their labour, leaving them increasingly dependent on men's earned income.⁵⁰ The 'optimistic' view, by contrast, argues that working women gained economic power because they had more opportunities to earn their own wage and hence gain independence outside the home.⁵¹ Increasingly, however, historians agree that both waged and non-waged labour was gendered long before industrialization made its full impact.⁵²

The gendering of work is necessarily associated with the cultural values informing it. Women's work, and their position as economic beings is therefore mediated by ideology. Just as we need a broader definition of work for women than for men, so also, as we saw in the previous section, do we need a broader definition of economy. In the case of genteel women and women of the middling sorts, this produces a distinct set of economic characteristics. While women in these social groups certainly did work for money, there were severe ideological constraints governing the kind of work that was acceptable, and the morality of participation in waged work *per se*. Distressed gentility might justify working as a companion or

⁴⁹ Pamela Sharpe, editor, *Women's Work: The English Experience 1650-1914* (London: Arnold 1998), p.26.

⁵⁰ See for example, Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*, 1919.

⁵¹ For example, Edward Shorter, 'Women's Work: What Difference Did Capitalism Make?', *Theory and Society*, 3, 1976, pp.513-27.

⁵² Shoemaker takes this view, as does Deborah Simonton in *A History of European Women's Work: 1700 to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

governess, at needlework, or even writing novels, while women in the middle ranks might be expected to lend a hand in supporting their husbands' capitalist enterprises, but there was an increasing cultural requirement that, to be considered genteel, women's economic roles had to be unwaged and carried out in the household. Thus, as indicated earlier 'oeconomicks' for women typically indicated a distinct set of domestic practices.⁵³ Hester Chapone wrote in 1773 that 'Oeconomy is so important a part of a woman's character [...] that it ought to have the precedence of all other accomplishments, and take its rank next to the first duties of life.'⁵⁴ This indicates how the moral and the economic interconnected in ideological constructions of femininity. We can also see that women's economic roles, regardless of station in life, were specifically characterized under the emergent political economy.

As far as female economic self-sufficiency is concerned, the household is again strongly implicated. Except where women worked to secure their own economic survival (and as a matter of necessity rather than independent choice), their waged and/or unwaged labour was essentially construed in terms of its contribution to the resources of the household. Two models of the self-sufficient household can be considered relevant in this period. The classical (Aristotelian) household maintained what might be termed a tonal presence, although its political character (and its civic version of the economic individual) gave way to a different model of citizenship based on capital and financial investment rather than ownership of land. As a tonal presence, the novel provides one location where this version of the self-sufficient household could be imaginatively figured, though its

⁵³ Nancy Armstrong in *Desire and Domestic Fiction* presents these as a set of discursive shifts that culturally refigure female labour and economy. Contemporary dictionaries from Bailey's of 1721 and Dyche's of 1735 to Johnson's of 1755 and Barlow's 1772, have definitions of 'oeconomy' that relate it to the regulating and management of affairs, particularly of the family and household.

⁵⁴ Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, 1773, *Female Education in the Age of Enlightenment*, Volume 2, edited Janet Todd (London: William Pickering, 1976).

presence as a political reality changed as the economic climate changed.⁵⁵ Although women had an economic role in this household, it was not a political one in the public sense of the term.

The second type of self-sufficient household has been identified with the labouring poor during the eighteenth century.⁵⁶ It has a long history and is characterized by its emphasis on maximizing the efficient use of resources to ensure the unit's economic survival. Combining income from labour and from sale of produce with home production of food, clothing, medicine and so on, the self-sufficient housewife was at the centre of the household, which was typically rural rather than urban. Its counterpart, the country house of the gentry, retained some of these self-sufficient practices, but became increasingly reliant on the consumption of goods bought in from the ever-expanding market economy. The self-sufficient housewife in *this* household was therefore self-sufficient in a different way: her economic practices combined organizational skills with the responsible regulation of resources in a private moral economy.

When it comes to the literary representation of female economic self-sufficiency, we first need to establish how literary forms such as the novel engaged with economic structures, both the monetary and non-monetary. Thompson argues in *Models of Value* that, while the public discourse of political economy was working through a crisis in the concept of monetary value, the novel, as private discourse, was doing the same with the concept of domestic value. Thus, the two discourses provide separate accounts of morality and economics, the points where they intrude on one another being of particular interest. In her study of sensibility and economics in the novel, Gillian Skinner rightly questions the absoluteness of

⁵⁵ One literary example is the Belmont estate in Frances Brooke's *Lady Julia Mandeville*, 1763. I discuss this in Chapter Two.

⁵⁶ See Malcolmson in Pahl, *On Work*, pp.48-60.

this division into public and private with its over-reliance on the transgressive moment, arguing instead that sentimental fiction deliberately embraces newer economic vocabularies and concepts and deploys the woman of economic ability as an established figure in the eighteenth-century novel.⁵⁷

What the novel provides above all is an imaginative space for representing female economic behaviour and experiences. Women's relationship to the political economy is an aspect of this – how they were positioned within it and affected by its modes and mechanisms, and also the extent to which they participated in its operations financially and through their labour. Also of relevance is how women are shown handling money, their own and that entrusted to them (by inheritance or marriage, for example). Another important aspect, as we have seen, is women's experience within the domestic economy, where their command of the resources and practices of the household could produce behaviour that was both personally and economically self-sufficient.

The novel's imaginative scope means, too, that the diversity of this experience, in its monetary and non-monetary dimensions, can be depicted in ways that either affirm or contest ideological models of the economic woman. Given the flexibility of the term 'economy', and the range of structures and sets of resources to which it can be applied, the novel's engagement with women as economic beings is similarly flexible. The thematic and strategic modelling of female self-sufficiency within the novel is thus a useful analytical means of mediating between the monetary and non-monetary aspects of women's economic roles.

⁵⁷ Skinner, pp.1-14.

3. Methodology and Outline

In the chapters that follow I take an analytical approach to examining the concept of female self-sufficiency in the eighteenth-century woman's novel. Whilst this does not preclude a descriptive element – I am always interested in how women's moral and economic behaviour is treated thematically and as “story” – my primary concern is to formulate a critical model of self-sufficiency to evaluate the literary representation of female economic experience. As such, a number of the literary, cultural and economic ideas outlined in the preceding sections are followed up as a means of giving breadth to the modelling process.

I use ‘self-sufficiency’ in its modern formulation and apply it to both individual and collective behaviours and structures, and in the context of the resources relevant to both. I address the moral or personal and the economic dimensions of self-sufficiency both separately and as they interrelate. This has produced some nuancing in the methodology applied to each dimension. Whilst I treat women's moral experience largely in the context of cultural constructions of femininity and its discourses, I have sought a more diverse approach to ‘economy’, treating it as a term for describing a range of structures and their regulation.

Thus, I distinguish my work from other studies of women's economic experience (in the monetary sense) by encompassing non-monetary economies in determining the nature and scope of that experience. I refer freely to moral, domestic and personal economies. I also refer to narrative and fictive economies as a means of exploring how women writers organize the resources of novel-writing – the narrative strategies, fictional components and literary techniques available to them – for representing self-sufficiency. It should be clear, then, that I am not concerned with an exposition of economic theory in the political sense, so much as

in an imaginative sense, as a means of realizing women's literary presence as economic beings across a range of economies.

I am aware that in choosing to focus on four writers in particular – namely, Sarah Fielding, Frances Brooke, Frances Sheridan and Frances Burney – a certain refinement of scope has occurred. The moral and the economic, after all, are important issues for any writer seeking to depict the modes and breadth of human experience. It is this very fact, however, demonstrating as it does the wide-ranging presence of self-sufficient formulations in novels of the period, that gives a productive impetus to the selection process. Whilst certain other authors might have been included – Charlotte Smith, on both biographical and literary grounds, being perhaps one example – I have chosen writers who I consider most relevant to my topic, some of whose texts are representative without having attracted close critical attention, and whose range of work and strategy allows the most productive perspectives on self-sufficiency for the purposes of my study. I give details of these perspectives in the chapter-by-chapter outline below.

Furthermore, in choosing to focus on female self-sufficiency, I have confined myself to female-authored fiction. This is not to say, of course, that the term is exclusively feminine; rather, I have elected to give scope to the representation of economic femininity at a time when women were virtually non-existent in a legal and political sense. Economic masculinity – and male self-sufficiency – are present in my study in the sense that they implicitly inform the tonal and structural systems within which women are positioned. Hence, one aim of the study is to show what was distinctive about *female* self-sufficiency in the context of those systems' spheres of influence.

The time-span of my study covers the period from the early 1740s when Sarah Fielding published her first novel, to 1814, when Frances Burney published

her last. This span might have been amplified at both ends to include writers such as Eliza Haywood at the beginning, Jane Austen and Mary Brunton later. However, some means of deciding cut-off points is called for and I have chosen a span that reflects the evolution and diversity of eighteenth-century prose fictions by women, at the same time as structuring a continuum in terms of forms, tones and concerns. Broadly speaking, this is the period of the novel of sentiment and I have used this factor to structure my discussions. One omission may be noticed and that is the radical woman's novel of the 1790s. The politicizing of women's moral and economic experience is, tonally and spatially, a topic for study in its own right – and one which others have addressed.⁵⁸ I have chosen, therefore, to treat it implicitly, showing its influence as part of other developments in order to maintain an evenness of focus on those novels where independent and self-sufficient behaviour has, by traditional critical consensus, been less explicitly represented.

The four chapters that follow are, a few temporal overlaps aside, in chronological sequence. In Chapter One, I focus on the writings of Sarah Fielding (1710-1768), selecting five of her works to show how the concept of self-sufficiency establishes a presence in novels of the period. The chapter has an introductory function in the sense that it establishes how self-sufficiency can be modelled across a range of economies, in both thematic and analytical modes. These models are formulated as critical tools for application during the rest of the study. I look at Sarah Fielding's own writing practices to establish the concept of narrative and fictive economies and how they illuminate other models of self-sufficiency. Central to the aims of the chapter is a consideration of how Fielding's

⁵⁸ Examples include Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel, 1780-1805* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976) and Claudia Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender and Sentimentality in the 1790s* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

characters, as individuals and in social units, reveal the scope for representing women as economic beings.

Chapter Two focuses on the writings of Frances Brooke (1724-1789) and introduces some demographic categories for evaluating women's economic experience, namely those of marriageable woman, wife, widow and spinster. The characterization and implications of each of these positions is considered and is situated in the context of contemporary domestic ideology. The chapter examines how women engaged with the model of the ideal domestic woman and asks whether the emergence of more self-sufficient lines of conduct is an effective critique of the domestic ideal.

Frances Sheridan (1724-1766) is the focus of Chapter Three. I consider her two Sidney Bidulph narratives alongside Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*. Using contemporary conduct books and educational literature, and offering a social history of female education in the eighteenth century, the chapter examines the processes by which individuals are acculturated into collective practices and explores the implications of this for self-sufficiency. I consider different versions of self-sufficiency, one culturally endorsed by the prescriptive literature; the other based on autonomous choice and action. I assess how these versions co-exist and compete.

In Chapter Four I look at the novels of Frances Burney (1752-1840) in the context of female employment. Crucial to this topic is the critical evaluation of a term much used by Burney herself: 'self-dependence'. The chapter seeks a broad-based approach to defining women's work and provides a social and economic history of female employment, including the role of charity. The chapter enquires into the relationship between self-sufficiency and work. It also asks whether Burney's self-dependence is another name for our modern usage of self-sufficiency.

Throughout this study, I have chosen to give prominence to discussions of the works of the selected writers. Therefore, the surrounding discourses and critical frameworks, whether contemporary or modern, and from whatever discipline, are always there to inform and elucidate rather than to compete. This strikes me as the most productive way to present these writers' engagement with the concept of female self-sufficiency.

Chapter One

Models of Self-sufficiency: The Works of Sarah Fielding

The term self-sufficiency appears regularly throughout Sarah Fielding's work. The Carpenter's Wife in *David Simple* (1744) is described as having 'a certain Self-sufficiency in all she said or did' (355). In *The Cry* (1754), the assembly of men and women collectively known as the Cry 'puffed up their vanity to the highest pitch of self-sufficiency' (Vol.2, 61), whilst in Fielding's late novel, *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn* (1759), the narrative refers to Lady Fashion's 'Pertness, and Self-sufficiency' (Vol.2, 17).¹ These are all examples of the term being used in the pejorative sense current in the eighteenth century, as are all other instances in Fielding's work.

Yet we do not have to go far in reading Fielding's fictional prose to realise that she was also engaging with self-sufficiency as we would understand it in its modern formulation. Her principal characters are delineated as moral and economic beings, often forced to test the extent of their resilience against the world's impositions and encroachments. This self-sufficient endeavour is played out again and again, both in the moral and economic dimension, across the sixteen-year span of Fielding's published work, and across the variety of modes and forms that she worked in. In most cases it is the female experience that is placed to the fore: Camilla's and Cynthia's in *David Simple*; Mrs Bilson's in *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn*; and Ophelia's in Fielding's last work, *The History of Ophelia* (1760), where the heroine's education in the ways of the world is as much economic as moral.

¹ Respectively, the editions referred to are: *The Adventures of David Simple and Volume the Last*, edited by Peter Sabor (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1998); *The Cry* (Delmar, New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1986); *The History of the Countess of Delhwyne* (London: A. Millar, 1759). All further references are cited in the text.

But in addition to the moral and economic aspects of self-sufficient experience, Fielding makes the reader aware of the importance she places on examining the mind and on the individual responsibility in exercising a willingness to understand its workings. Her most consistent theme lies in the contrast between the calm, tranquil mind and the restless uneasy mind: the ‘fatal Effects of indulged Passions, and the happy Result of restraining all Passions and Tumults of the human Breast within the proper Limits prescribed by Reason’.² This psychological self-sufficiency, manifested in the mind’s calm self-possession and the repercussions when such self-possession does not pertain, is explored most prominently in *The Governess* (1749), *The Cry* and *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* (1757). In each of these cases, Fielding shows the impositions – on self, on others and others on us – that ensue when the intricacies of the human mind are not governed by self-knowledge. As Portia puts it in *The Cry*:

Men keep in their minds, as well as in their houses, a private corner, into which they are continually cramming all things disagreeable to their sight; endeavouring by this method to conceal their rubbish from their own view, as well as from that of their neighbours. (Vol. 2, 168)

One aim of this chapter is to show how Fielding’s works structure models of self-sufficiency in these different realms: the moral, the economic and the psychological; and I shall be explaining more fully below how such modelling can be approached in practice.

First, it is worth considering briefly what part Sarah Fielding’s own experiences and the context of her literary productions play in the formulation of these models. She was born in 1710 into a family which had gentry status, but

² Preface to *The History of the Countess of Delhwyn*, Vol. I, p.xvii.

which was impecunious. Her mother died when she was seven and she and her six siblings were cared for by an aunt, then by their maternal grandmother. A combination of legal disputes, little family wealth and the fact she never married meant Fielding was always in a financially vulnerable position.³ In the Advertisement for her first published work, *David Simple*, Fielding mentions the ‘Distress in her Circumstances’ which is ‘the best Excuse that can be made for a Woman’s venturing to write at all’. In part this was a rhetorical strategy, part of the framework of justification required of women writers in the eighteenth century, and the Advertisement shows Fielding’s sensitivity to these ambivalent attitudes to female authorship. But it also reveals a genuine resolve to assert the predicament of the dependent woman, a figure who recurs throughout her works. When Camilla states in *David Simple* that ““there is no Situation so deplorable, no Condition so much to be pitied, as that of a Gentle-woman in real Poverty”” (132), her words can be applied to Fielding’s own case. Even if, in Carolyn Woodward’s words, Fielding ‘achieved a measure of financial self-sufficiency through her writing’,⁴ she was never completely free of her reliance on others to offset the ‘Distress in her Circumstances’.

In a more productive sense, Fielding also relied on others for intellectual stimulation and this was reflected in her works and authorship. The translation of Xenophon’s *Memoirs of Socrates*, which she produced in the late 1750s and published in 1762, illustrates this. Classical learning was not part of female education in the eighteenth century and the boarding-school Fielding attended in

³ There is a clear and concise account of Fielding’s early life in Peter Sabor’s Introduction to *David Simple*, pp.viii-x. For the most complete biographical account available see Chapter One, “‘A Woman of Singular Energy, Learning and Ability’”, pp.1-28 of Linda Bree’s *Sarah Fielding* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996). There is a useful section on Sarah Fielding’s financial hardships in the context of her literary productions in Mika Suzuki, ‘*The True Use of Reading*’: *Sarah Fielding and Mid Eighteenth Century Literary Strategies*, PhD Thesis, University of London, 1998.

⁴ Carolyn Woodward, ‘Sarah Fielding’s Self Destructing Utopia: *The Adventures of David Simple*’ in Dale Spender, editor, *Living by the Pen: Early British Women Writers* (New York and London: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1992), pp.65-81. This reference, p.65

Salisbury provided only the accomplishments and practical skills considered necessary for a gentlewoman.⁵ Fielding learnt Greek and Latin from Arthur Collier, whose sister Jane was one of Fielding's closest friends and with whom she may have collaborated on *The Cry*. They were members of an intellectual circle in Salisbury, which also included the classicist James Harris, who helped Fielding with her translation of Xenophon. By the time she was working on the *Memoirs*, Fielding was part of another circle, a community of learned women based in Bath, whose members included Lady Barbara Montagu and Sarah Scott. The circle itself, and the works of the women involved in it, reflect both the idea of community and motifs of shared interests and mutual support. Sarah Scott's novel *Millenium Hall* (1762) is an example of this, as are Fielding's own *David Simple* narratives.

Another manifestation of these forms of productive reciprocity and intellectual resourcefulness emerges in the modes of Fielding's literary practice. Her *Remarks on Clarissa* (1749) is addressed to Samuel Richardson and presents conversations overheard between fictitious characters concerning Richardson's novel.⁶ However, as Bree points out, neither Fielding's engagement with Richardson's work nor their friendship prompted her to adopt his fictional approach.⁷ Fielding retained her independent moral and technical vision in both these respects. *The Cry*, as mentioned above, was probably written in collaboration with Jane Collier, while Fielding's 1747 work, *Familiar Letters*, included contributions from James Harris and Henry Fielding.⁸ In her turn, Fielding is generally believed to have made her first published appearances in two works by

⁵ The question of female education in the eighteenth century is discussed in detail in Chapter Three of this study.

⁶ Sarah Fielding – and Jane Collier – became part of Richardson's circle in the late 1740s, despite the literary hostility between him and Sarah's brother, Henry.

⁷ Bree, p. 79.

⁸ *Familiar Letters Between the Principal Characters in David Simple and Some Others* (Dublin: E. & J. Exshaw, 1747). Published three years after *David Simple*, the work was not an extension of the novel, nor did it resemble a novel in form or content. Rather it presents an exchange of letters containing narratives, reflections and commentaries which explore moral behaviour.

her brother, in the form of Leonora's letters in *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and Anna Boleyn's narrative in *Miscellanies* (1743).

Given this established literary practice of contribution and collaboration, the Preface that Henry Fielding wrote for the second edition of *David Simple* (also 1744) would seem to fit into this model of support and resourcefulness, since his name attached to her novel acted as a kind of celebrity endorsement in order to boost sales. His Preface actively seeks to praise his sister's achievement and replaces Sarah Fielding's own Advertisement to the Reader in the first edition in which she adopted the requisite stance of apologizing for 'the many Inaccuracies' of style and 'other Faults' in composition which are only to be expected in the 'Work of a Woman'. Furthermore, by singling out for remark his sister's consummate knowledge of the intricacies of human nature, Henry Fielding asserts the merits of the ensuing narrative, which is then left to stand apparently autonomously, its integrity – its self-sufficiency in fact – intact.

However, this fraternal Preface raises several points of ambiguity, poised as it is between acknowledgement of Sarah Fielding's authorial autonomy and sustained acts of appropriation. Henry Fielding's most overt confirmation of the former is to clear up the mistaken attribution of the work to himself. Ironically, one of the ways in which he does this is to delineate the precise nature of his involvement in *David Simple*, 'the Share I have in this Book'.⁹ Primarily, this was to correct 'some Grammatical and other Errors in Style'; perhaps the very 'Inaccuracies' and 'Faults' Sarah Fielding apologized for in her Advertisement. It could appear from this that Henry Fielding is as much endorsing his sister's

⁹ Henry Fielding's Preface is reproduced as Appendix 1 in the University Press of Kentucky 1998 edition, pp.343-47. The textual changes he made – around six hundred – are detailed in Appendix II, pp.350-66. Peter Sabor provides a commentary on the Preface and Henry Fielding's involvement in the novel in his Introduction, pp.xxvii-xxx, suggesting he was 'motivated less by a desire to expunge errors than to shape his sister's novel into one reflecting his own concept of fiction' (xxx). Sabor's editorial decision that the Preface should be 'relegated' to an appendix so that 'the opening words belong to Sarah' (xxvii) seems fitting, therefore.

apologetic stance as he is her authorship. His references to ‘this little Book’ and to his sister as ‘my Author’ and the unfortunate ‘Absence from Town’ which ‘prevented my correcting’ the first edition suggest a proprietorial positioning not altogether belied by such statements as ‘I believe there are few Books in the World so absolutely the Author’s own as this’. He also uses the Preface to conduct a defence of his authorial chastity against the many misattributions of works of ‘Scurrility’ and ‘Bawdy’ to his pen. It is difficult not to be aware of a sense of encroachment in reading this Preface.¹⁰

The relationship between the first and second editions of *David Simple* and the respective roles of Sarah and Henry Fielding in this literary venture do not, therefore, altogether replicate the model of supportive, tactful collaboration outlined earlier. Fielding herself was always alert to the distinction between individual or communal enterprise based on reciprocity and moral equilibrium; and the effects upon this of encroachment and imposition, whether from within (in the form of human weakness) or without (failings in the way society is organized). The *David Simple* narratives, *The Governess* and *The Cry* each in their respective ways examine how groups of people living in close community function together. It is here that we can begin to explore how Sarah Fielding models the concept of self-sufficiency in her work. The economic hardship of her own life, the supportive relationships, both literary and personal, she drew on and the exigencies of female

¹⁰ The question of Sarah Fielding’s authorial self-sufficiency in relation to Henry Fielding is raised again by Wayne C. Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Second Edition, 1983). In his highly dismissive account of her work, Booth finds Fielding’s early works (those published in the 1740s) unremarkable, though inoffensive. He is less tolerant when, as he claims, Fielding attempts to revise her narrative techniques in the light of her brother’s spectacular success with *Tom Jones* (1749). She does so, Booth says, only to ‘fail miserably’; her efforts, for example, to replicate Henry Fielding’s prefatory chapters and narrative diversions merely result in parades of ‘a little pointless learning’ and various outbreaks of ‘puerile analysis’. It is difficult to imagine a more devastatingly negative account; nor one that is more misleading and unhelpful, for Booth is surely mistaken in his insistence on reading Sarah Fielding’s works as imitations of one novel by her brother. The assumptions he makes, not only about this writer, but about the cultural and historical contexts of woman’s writing, speak for themselves. See p.219.

authorship, which pitted the opportunity for economic and intellectual independence against an obligation to be deferential and grateful for assistance are some of the preliminary pieces in establishing these models. My concern now is to show in a more practical way how such models emerge in her writings; how, in a thematic, strategic and technical sense, Fielding engaged with the concept of self-sufficiency in her work; and how the formulation of models of self-sufficiency can provide an important analytical tool for evaluating, not only Sarah Fielding's work, but that of other eighteenth-century female writers. I will take as my starting point Fielding's own first work, *The Adventures of David Simple* in order to establish some models of self-sufficiency before going on to show how these can be applied to her subsequent works.

The Adventures of David Simple: 'No Condition so much to be pitied'

David Simple tells the story of the eponymous hero's search for a real friend; a quest which is episodic in nature and produces encounters with a wide range of characters. As his name suggests, David is shown as somewhat adrift in a world whose values bemuse him. Fielding depicts him as the feminized man of feeling, whose moral integrity and genuine altruism are offended by the venality and self-interest of those he encounters. The real friend in the end proves to be a woman, Camilla, whom he marries. Together with her brother Valentine and Valentine's wife Cynthia, a close communal unit is formed (dismantled in *Volume the Last*), which attains to a self-sufficiency within an enclosed domestic context, based on shared values and common ownership of resources. The novel's form works with this moral and economic impetus. It comprises a main structure focusing on David's experiences, into which a sequence of self-contained – or self-

sufficient – narratives is interpolated. Each of the narratives reflects the novel's wider issues and strategically enacts a relationship between narrator and narratee(s) from which experiential and interpretive opportunities are produced. Thus, it could be said that, for both reader and character, Fielding's engagement with ideas of self-sufficiency is embedded in the very texture of the novel itself.

The book opens with motifs of treachery as David is betrayed by 'both the Man and the Woman he had loved' (35). His brother Daniel forges their father's will, thereby appropriating what should have been David's inheritance. Having reduced David to a 'State of Dependency' (13), Daniel's envy of his brother's superior nature prompts him to force him out of their home. This is the starting-point of David's journey. He soon meets Miss Nanny Johnson to whom, with her father's approval, he becomes engaged. However, Miss Johnson receives a better offer and David is torn between anger and a distress that leaves his heart 'ready to burst' (34). This double 'Treachery' (35) almost convinces him to give up his search for a real friend. Only inner conviction encourages him to continue, for 'his own Mind was a Proof to him, that Generosity, Good-nature, and a Capacity for real Friendship, were to be found in the World' (35). He resumes his journey therefore, changing lodgings each week, trying new neighbourhoods, meeting different people – Mr Spatter and Mr Orgueil (one of his ultimate undoers) amongst them – and experiencing a variety of situations. Eventually he encounters Cynthia and is struck by her expression of 'fix'd Melancholy' (78) which immediately interests him in her behalf.

Before looking in more detail at Cynthia's story, the relating of which forms the first important inset narrative of the book, it is worth considering how David's experiences up to this point blend the economic, moral and psychological as their chief components. The acts of betrayal by his brother and fiancée are economically

motivated, but beyond acknowledging a resultant financial hardship, David does not appear to construe these acts in terms of economic affliction. Rather, his response is at the psychological level: it is a sentimental affliction, one where a sense of moral rightness and the need to think well of others is disappointed. This fits with the critical practice of reading *David Simple* as a sentimental novel first and foremost. Of course, that is what it is; and studies such as Bree's, Downs-Miers' and Schellenberg's, which focus on how Fielding is using the sentimental model, are rewarding in their own way.¹¹ Yet, it is some of the most recent criticism, that of Gillian Skinner and Liz Bellamy in particular, that I find more useful for approaching Fielding's novel.¹² By focusing on the role of economic discourse within the sentimental novel, they 'rescue' sentimental fiction from being read in terms of a simple polarization between economic and sentimental values. Under that more limited construction, feminine virtues are seen as threatened by the harsh masculine values of the economic world, which deny women any economic existence other than as commodities in male systems of exchange. But, as Skinner demonstrates, women have economic ability too and this is a prelude to my own argument that women in the eighteenth-century novel of sentiment have to be read as economic beings. David Simple may construe his early experiences in sentimental terms, rendering their economic dimension as so much emotional distress, but Cynthia's narrative shows that women were by no means inclined to do the same.

Cynthia tells David her story over a period of three days. She recounts her experiences as an autonomous, though indigent, woman, trying to make provision

¹¹ Deborah Downs-Miers, 'Springing the Trap: Subtexts and Subversions' in *Fetter'd or Free?: British Women Novelists 1670-1815*, edited by Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1987), pp.308-23. Betty A. Schellenberg, *The Conversational Circle: Re-reading the English Novel, 1740-1775* (University Press of Kentucky, 1996) pp.22-35.

¹² Gillian Skinner, *Sensibility and Economics in the Novel* and Liz Bellamy, *Commerce, Morality and the Eighteenth-Century Novel*.

for herself amidst the impositions of dependency and tyranny. Her early preference for reading and learning is not approved of by her family: ‘I never spoke, but I was a *Wit*; if I was silent, it was Contempt’ (81). Her sisters mockingly speculate on which of her books ‘will teach her to be a Housewife’ (85), the only form of reading they countenance as useful for a woman to know.¹³ However, Cynthia openly rejects the role of housewife, refusing her father’s choice of husband for her by declaring: ‘I had no kind of Ambition to be his *upper Servant*’ (86). Cynthia constructs marriage, first as a poor form of employment, in which she wonders ‘how many Offices he [her putative husband] had allotted for me to perform’ and what ‘*small Wages*’ she might hope for, then as ‘*Prostitution*’ (86). Fielding here exposes the limitations in one of the most important economic choices open to women, marriage. Nor is the alternative much better, for, following her father’s death and his exclusion of her from his will, Cynthia is forced to work for her living and to accommodate herself to ‘a Character I could not bear, *i.e.* that of a *Toad-eater*’ (89) as a lady’s companion, in order to escape ‘*Poverty and Distress*’ (96). It is David who frees her from this situation when he provides her with the means to take a lodging and to cover expenses. The disinterestedness of the offer, distanced from the obligations and impositions of dependency, allows Cynthia to accept.

What Cynthia’s narrative shows is how women could think of – and for – themselves as economic beings. The ways in which she is economically circumscribed are important, but they do not change the fact that she consciously constructs herself as an individual participating in economic modes and behaviours. Moreover, she does so without sacrificing her (feminine) capacity for emotional feeling of the virtuous and morally correct sort. She is described as ‘dissolved in

¹³ Books of advice for women proliferated in the eighteenth century and form a distinct discourse. I examine conduct literature, both as a discrete discourse and in terms of how it informs sentimental fiction, in Chapter Three of the study.

Tears, and in such an Agony, that she was hardly able to speak' (95) when her employer makes false imputations against her conduct. This incident, and Cynthia's narration as a whole, tells us something about where we must look for models of female self-sufficiency in Fielding's work. Typically, it will involve a self-aware attentiveness to the prescribed systems of social and moral behaviour from which some more independent line of conduct emerges. It will also entail some form of economic behaviour, which tests the construction of women as non-economic beings, or as beings without economic ability. The texts might be cautious – even orthodox – in their strategies for justifying female self-sufficiency – predicating it on necessity or distress, for example, or by emphasizing the virtues of the woman in question;¹⁴ but they do not disguise the woman's ability to regulate her own moral and economic resources and behaviour. In this way, tropes of self-sufficiency can function as a critique of the sentimental model since they mark out a space that is autonomous in scope; and Cynthia's narrative can be seen as a critique in miniature. To explore this more fully, I wish to say something about the form of *David Simple* and the functions of narrative within the work, but this is best done after looking at another example: Camilla's story, the second of the novel's inset narratives.

The narratee of Camilla's story, like Cynthia's, is David. She tells him how she and her brother Valentine have been driven away from home by the machinations of a cruel step-mother who decided 'that the only way to spend all her Husband's Fortune, was to make him believe we were his greatest Enemies' (111). She forces Camilla and her brother from their father's home by accusing them of incest. They find a lodging, 'but what to do for Money to pay for it, or to keep us, we could not imagine' (129). Impoverished, her brother ill, threatened by the prospect of prostitution, Camilla has to 'seek out new ways of getting Bread for us

¹⁴ This is exactly what Sarah Fielding herself did in her preface to the first edition of *David Simple*

both' (129). Her description of the world's hostility to a woman in her position seeking employment likens it to being stranded in 'the wildest Desart' [*sic*] (133). As she tells David 'there is no Situation so deplorable, no Condition so much to be pitied, as that of a Gentle-woman in real Poverty' (132). Interestingly the hostility here is drawn, not from the register of sentimental discourse surrounding the conduct of women, but from that of economics and employment. Camilla can practise no trade because 'People in that Station would think we were endeavouring to take their Bread out of their mouths' (132); 'They will not suffer us to be equal with them, and get our Bread as they do' (133). Camilla's economic willingness, her economic potential, are thus thwarted by lack of opportunity.¹⁵ It is only David's 'Bounty' (133) that relieves her from her predicament.

Camilla's narrative introduces some new elements into the book's modelling of self-sufficiency. Camilla is a version of the virtuous, necessitous woman who has had economic independence thrust upon her. Her experience of dependence and tyranny is different from that of Cynthia: one senses a more oppositional stance in Cynthia, as evidenced by her active pursuit of autonomous choice. Nevertheless, they are linked by the nature of their circumstantial difficulties. Camilla's problem is explicitly identified as one of status. As a 'Gentle-woman' she cannot find work, despite her preparedness to find 'new ways' (129) to earn a living. Her decision to try begging involves disguising her status by dressing in rags. But she falls foul of the men on whose patch she unwittingly operates. They rob her and demand how she 'dared to stand begging in their District, without their leave' (131). Just as those in trade close ranks against her, so too do the 'Fellows' (131) of the street. In this

¹⁵ Skinner suggests that Camilla's story fictionally represents how women were being excluded from trades in the eighteenth century. See p.28 of her study. Her later claim that Camilla rejects trade as an option (p.32) seems inconsistent therefore, and is not supported by the text. I explore the question of women's employment and its social and economic history in Chapter Four of my study. What primarily concerns Fielding in this present instance is Camilla's status as a 'Gentle-woman' and the implications this has for her attempts at economic self-sufficiency.

way Fielding describes how women's efforts at self-sufficiency are circumscribed by the withholding of the resources to effect it. Even when Camilla makes money (by begging), it is reclaimed by the men who control the economic system in which she earned it. Fielding's modelling of self-sufficiency thus posits the tensions amongst the economic structures within which women are positioned. Camilla's story shows that female access to the resources of work and wages is limited by gender, opportunity and status.

Both Cynthia's and Camilla's narratives, as well as structuring the concept of self-sufficiency in a thematic sense, also function as elements in a fictive economy that can itself be said to model aspects of self-sufficiency. Indeed, if these two characters' efforts at economic agency are located in the personal histories they narrate, we might make a link to those narrative theories that explore narrative agency by employing an economic vocabulary. For example, the idea of literature as a transactional phenomenon involving text and reader has developed to encompass the language of exchange as a means of theorizing the functions of narrative.¹⁶ Ross Chambers has posited the idea of narrative as a social compact which relies on 'social agreements, implicit pacts or contracts, in order to produce exchanges'.¹⁷ Such exchanges require 'an understanding between the participants [...] as to the purposes served by the narrative function'.¹⁸ An example of such an exchange model is shown in the relational positioning between narrator and narratee, in which 'the narratee offers attention in exchange for information, the

¹⁶ Louise Rosenblatt is credited by Susan Suleiman with first proposing the term transaction ('to designate the relationship between text and reader') in her 1938 book *Literature as Exploration*. See the Introduction to *The Reader in the Text*, edited by Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980). See also Norman H. Holland's essay, 'Literature as Transaction', in *What is Literature?*, edited by Paul Hernandi (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978).

¹⁷ Ross Chambers, *Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p.4.

¹⁸ Chambers, p.8.

narrator sacrifices the information for some form of attention'.¹⁹ Within the fictive economy of Fielding's narrative we can see many instances where such narrator-narratee positionings occur.

To begin with, there is the relationship between the novel's narrator and its readers (or narratees), real and implied. David does not tell his own story, leaving the narrator to structure his episodic experiences and guide us through the interpolated narratives, in which other narrators' voices come to the fore. However, the narrator does claim that 'this History is all taken from his own Mouth' (7), indicating that David was once a narrator himself.²⁰ That this role has now been distanced beyond the pages of the book gives a heightened prominence to those narratives that remain to dominate the first two volumes: Cynthia's story, Camilla's story and, later, Isabelle's story. These are all female narratives of course. Their position within the novel's fictive economy creates a micro-macro dynamic of exchange metaphors predicated on narrator-narratee roles, in which the inset narratives, together with their narratorial structures, reflect and comment on the formal organization of the novel as a whole. If we look at how this works in practice, we discern an emphasis on experiential and interpretive opportunities; in other words, the resources of narrative are deployed in a way that produces individual and independent behaviour in its narrators and narratees. This invites us to consider how the operations of narrative within the novel's economy can model ideas of self-sufficiency.

During Cynthia's story, David is fairly much a silent narratee. While Fielding's narrator might interrupt to present David's thoughts, in which 'the Reasonableness of what Cynthia said' (83) is acknowledged, David himself leaves her alone to speak, being 'too well pleased with her Manner of talking, to interrupt

¹⁹ Chambers, p. 51.

²⁰ This also fits into the conventional strategy in novels of this period of establishing a mock authenticity for the narrative voice.

her' (83). He intervenes on occasion to seek clarification of some of her terms, but he does not comment on her story, either its content or strategy, leaving his presence and silence to act as oblique markers of his response. However, during Camilla's story, David's role is much more noticeable, as is Camilla's awareness of her responsibilities as storyteller. In an echo of the concerns expressed in Sarah Fielding's own Preface, she remarks to David, 'I tell you, Sir, every thing without Order, and hope you will be so good as to forgive the Incoherence of my Style' (118). Reflecting this heightened awareness, David is more responsive and more verbal: he questions, applauds, concurs with, reacts to and comments on her narration. At one point he 'shook with Horror' and 'could hardly forbear cursing' (131); at another he almost faints when he sees Camilla do so. The exchange of information for attention (to use Chambers' terms) has a sentimental basis here – in David's developing feelings for Camilla; but it is also clear that Fielding has other purposes in evolving the role of the narratee in these interpolated narratives.

Mary Anne Schofield has claimed that 'the underlying concern of each of [Sarah Fielding's] novels is how to teach women to read properly'.²¹ Schofield considers this claim thematically, but it seems important to address it as a strategic endeavour too. Fielding's techniques draw attention to how the narratee behaves within the interpolated narratives and, by this means, Fielding simultaneously offers instruction and guidance to the real reader of *David Simple*. Not only is she teaching them how to read narrative and how to engage with narrative (that is the kinds of responses that are available and appropriate); she is also instructing them in the *effects* of narrative. Her aim is to promote the reader's capacity to become narrators

²¹ Mary Anne Schofield, *Masking and Unmasking the Female Mind* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1990), pp.108-27. This point is made on p. 108. Schofield's reading is undermined by a number of textual misreadings. Her reference to Cynthia's marrying then leaving the suitor who wishes to make her his 'upper Servant' is, perhaps, the most unforgivable.

in their own right and engage in shared experiential and interpretive activities.²²

Since this requires a command of the resources and relationships which operate within the narrative economy, such activities become a form of economic behaviour in their turn. However, the economic modes and exchange mechanisms of this behaviour are distinct from those operating in systems of financial economy. This suggests that the functions of narrative, and of the narrator-narratee relationship, model additional forms of self-sufficiency that are relevant to understanding the concept's presence in the works of women writers during this period. Again, it is best to look to Fielding's text in a practical way in order to examine this point.

Following the auto-narrations of Cynthia's and Camilla's histories, there is a shift to characters narrating other people's stories. Within the space of a few pages, David relates Cynthia's history to Camilla, then to Valentine. He next tells part of Camilla's story to Cynthia. 'David's Narration' (136) reveals the interconnections between the narratives' subjects: both Camilla and Valentine, it emerges, have known and loved Cynthia at an earlier stage of their histories. The four are thus brought together by an exchange of narratives. Fielding consolidates this by sending the foursome out to take a coach-ride together. After a period of silence, Cynthia asks 'what they were all so thoughtful about' (147-8) and, one by one, they relate their thoughts. The motif, again, is that of sharing by exchange.²³ Fittingly, the novel's third interpolated narrative, that of Isabelle, follows immediately on from the coach-ride and has these four characters as its audience of narratees.

²² *The Governess* takes this aim further in both form and content, and will be discussed later. It is interesting that conduct literature of this period puts emphasis on young women learning to express themselves correctly for the purposes of both conversing and relating.

²³ When Cynthia shares her thoughts, it is to reveal that she has been looking at the shops and pondering how they trade in superfluity and luxury. This leads her to meditate on the unequalizing effects of property and how the relationship between fashionable women and tradesmen involves his receiving 'her Money in Exchange for those things which appear so trifling' and to whose vanity he 'perhaps owes his own and his Family's Support' (148). This passage consequently offers a juxtaposition of economic vocabularies, in which different applications of exchange are highlighted.

Isabelle's narration relates her sentimental history, particularly with regard to her lover Dumont. It also embeds subsidiary narratives relating to its cast of lovers. Its heightened register and almost melodramatic emphasis on the misfortunes and misunderstandings of the lovers distinguish it from the earlier interpolated narratives: subsistence and earning a wage are not amongst Isabelle's concerns.²⁴ Her narratees' reactions are consequently expressed in a similar register, declaring 'Indignation' or 'Approbation' at the 'Sentiments' expressed by the narrative's characters and their behaviour (163). Their reactions to Isabelle's story are most often described collectively as when 'The whole Company begged her not to tire herself, and expressed their hearty Thanks for what she had already done' (157). During her absences for rest they discuss and share their responses to what they have heard. These reactions are also expressed collectively: Fielding frequently repeats the phrase 'the whole Company' in describing them. That Fielding is not interested in individuating the narratees at this stage suggests that some development has occurred through the processes of narrative exchange.

Ross Chambers' theory of narrative as a social compact is made concrete in the group of four like-minded people who listen to Isabelle's story and who, significantly, form the self-sufficient community of friends explored in *Volume the Last*, which will be discussed more fully below. The group has emerged from a sequence of narrative acts, in which narrator-narratee positionings have been given prominence. Their negotiation of the exchange mechanisms that pertain within the narrative economy has allowed them to refine a form of behaviour based on sharing and absence of hierarchy. That their baptismal act as a community of narratees should be within the sentimental register of Isabelle's story (who is not herself one of the group) is significant, then. It suggests that their values are to be identified

²⁴ Isabelle's story is reminiscent of Eliza Haywood's shorter, sentimental fictions. See for example, Haywood, *Three Novellas*, edited by E. A. Wilputte (Colleagues Press, 1995).

with this register rather than with those of the systems of economic power that afflicted them previously; not in the sense that they eschew all participation in the political economy – the family unit in *Volume the Last* is very much an economic unit, as will be shown – but in the sense that they have discovered a mode of exchange preferable to the exchange mechanisms of the political economy.²⁵

Narrative acts and the relationships they entail can thus be seen as evolving behaviour of a distinctive kind. Fielding shows how such behaviour can be self-sufficient in tone as well as deed, since it involves marking out a space where autonomous practices can be deployed. These are self-sufficient in their reliance on the necessary measure of resources to effect their moral and economic accomplishment. At the end of *David Simple*, Fielding presents us with an image of the four friends, the bonds between them further affirmed in the marriage of David to Camilla and Valentine to Cynthia, as a ‘little Society’ modelling ‘a Picture’ of ‘real Happiness’ which ‘it is in the Power of every Community to attain [...] if every Member of it would perform the Part allotted him by *Nature*, or his *Station in Life*, with a sincere Regard to the Interest and Pleasure of the whole’ (237).²⁶ In this emphasis on the community’s self-regulation and the exerting of its members’ ‘Faculties for the common Good’ (237-8), Fielding depicts an ideal model of self-sufficiency.

However, while this ideal model, which embraces both community and individual behaviour, recurs throughout novels of the period (as this study will go on to show), Fielding’s work also initiates the problem of how such a model can be

²⁵ There is a connection here to feminist discourses which posit women as commodities within patriarchal systems of exchange. See, for example, Luce Irigaray’s *This Sex Which Is Not One*, translated by Catherine Porter (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985). Irigaray shows how women are measured in terms of their exchange value and circulated as products amongst men, a procedure in which they are complicit.

²⁶ This can be seen as a fictive version of the self-sufficient household economy which pertained during this period. A full examination of this unit within social and economic history is examined in Chapter Four of this study.

realistically sustained within contemporary moral and economic systems. From the female perspective, as Cynthia's and Camilla's narratives revealed, the prescribed modes of behaviour do not tolerate such self-sufficiency. The exchange vocabulary of narrative theory can assist again here in exposing these ambiguities, for, as Chambers has argued, 'To tell a story is to exercise power'.²⁷ At a first impression, this leaves any suggestion that the narrative economy structures alternative exchange mechanisms to those of the political economy looking vulnerable. If both use power relations to effect their operations, then both entail hierarchized relationships. Although Chambers refines his claim by pointing out that 'authority [for example of the narrator] is not an absolute', he also argues that 'the maintenance of narrative authority implies an act of seduction', which involves the manipulation of desire.²⁸ Under Chambers' model, narrators and narratees become seducers and the seduced. (Though seducees can resist seduction of course; within narrative terms, by withholding or withdrawing their attention.) Fielding's narrators and narratees, however, do not altogether fit into this model. Their emphasis on sharing predicates their narrative acts on equilibrium not power, so that even four listeners to one narrator in Isabelle's story does not appear asymmetrical in view of their shared responses. Yet, it cannot be said that these acts are without their own motivation. In this way, Fielding's fictive economy, in its strategies of narrative deployment, enacts the ambiguities in the modelling of self-sufficiency as a whole. Just as the ideal narrative exchange is structured within a wider narrative economy potentially based on the manipulations of power, so the ideal, self-sufficient community is structured within political and moral economies whose systems of

²⁷ Chambers, p.50.

²⁸ Chambers, pp.50 and 51 respectively. Patricia Meyer Spacks has also argued that 'Writing creates the vital illusion of power (however qualified) over an audience'. See Spacks, *Imagining a Self* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1976). This reference, p.226.

operation refuse to tolerate it. In *Volume the Last*, Fielding shows how these models of self-sufficiency are dismantled.

David Simple; Volume the Last: ‘One united Family’

Volume the Last, published in 1753, nine years after the first two volumes, continues and completes the story of David as one of the community of friends established at the end of volume two.²⁹ It is darker in tone, more remorseless in anatomizing the encroachments and impositions of the world at large and replaces earlier happiness with motifs of dispersal and death, including that of David himself.³⁰ The community enterprise is undermined by David’s increasing economic helplessness, a shift described by Bree as his crossing a crucial ‘dividing line [...] that between self-sufficient and suppliant’.³¹ This repositioning of David as needy beneficiary is seen by Gillian Skinner as essential to the novel’s critiquing of the problems in the system of benevolence.³² But her insistence on describing the group of friends as a ‘sentimental community’ risks consistently shifting the group’s operations as an economic unit into sentimental terms, which is limiting. It is a sentimental community, but it is an economic community too and this is important for understanding Fielding’s exploration of the self-sufficient unit in this work.³³

²⁹ Fielding wrote *Familiar Letters* (1747), *The Governess* and *Remarks on Clarissa* (both 1749) in between *David Simple* and *Volume the Last*. I have chosen to consider the volumes together in order to sustain the continuity of my argument.

³⁰ The darkening in the tone has sometimes been attributed to the personal disasters in Fielding’s life. These included not only her financial straits, but also a series of deaths in her family, including those of her three sisters in the space of a few months.

³¹ Bree, p.83.

³² See Skinner, pp.26-31.

³³ Schellenberg suggests that Fielding is exposing the impracticalities of the community achieving economic disinterestedness in an ‘increasingly interdependent economic structure’. This idea of the community as modelling a viable alternative to that structure is, therefore, of little practical use. See p.122 of *The Conversational Circle*. Bellamy makes a similar point on pp. 135-36 of *Commerce, Morality and the Eighteenth-Century Novel*. My own argument seeks to shift the emphasis in order to consider more thoroughly what the community’s economic characteristics *are* rather than simply focusing on the reasons for its failure.

The opening pages of *Volume the Last* reintroduce the image of the harmonious family. We are brought up to date with ‘David Simple’s Family, as we left them in the second Volume’ (246), consisting of the two couples and Camilla and Valentine’s father. Several children have now been added, but a fortune has been lost. The narrator is vague about the details of this ‘Misfortune’ since it ‘broke very little into the Tranquility of our happy Society’ (246). They simply adjust their plans, renting rather than buying a property, and establish a way of life based on ‘SHARING [*sic*] in common, without any Thought of separate Property’ (265). Their ‘Treasure’ is defined in moral terms, not as ‘worldly Prosperity’, but as moral certainty, ‘locked up nowhere, but in their own clear Breasts’ (261). At the same time, they have sufficient money to live on and enough to spare for charitable purposes. However, Fielding presents this ‘agreeable Tranquility’ (247) only to set in train the events that will undermine and destroy it, for David has already learned that his Uncle’s will, from which his fortune derives, is to be contested. Urged on by Mr Ratcliff and Mr Orgueil, David becomes increasingly embroiled ‘in the Embarrassment [*sic*] of a Chancery Suit’ (249), while Mrs Orgueil looks upon the ‘happy Society’ with contempt and seeks to undermine it from within.³⁴

What Fielding establishes in this first chapter are some of the ways in which we can read this family unit in economic terms. Its economic history, its economic self-sufficiency and its present economic status are all described and accounted for. This information is not as precise as pounds, shillings and pence and, in places the narrator quite pointedly declines to go into financial details; yet, we are clearly meant to recognize the group as an economic entity, alongside its sentimental and

³⁴ Carolyn Woodward explores the processes of the community’s destruction in her essay in *Living by the Pen*, pp.65-81. Her argument emphasizes the encroachments of patriarchy and concludes that the most David can do is to reveal his non-alignment with the patriarchal society’s values. It is worth noting that Woodward treats the three volumes that make up the David Simple narratives as one work.

moral presence. In part, this derives from Fielding's emphasis on the group's practices: where and how it lives, the respective roles of its individual members (Cynthia and Camilla, for example, 'embraced every Opportunity of directing their Family Affairs' (247)) and each individual's engagement with the group's collective concerns. It is also noticeable that Fielding's vocabulary gives the language an economic texture. The chapter heading refers to 'a brief Account of the Transaction of Eleven Years': she refers to the group's moral 'Treasure' and sustains the notion of its members' value to one another. This manner of sharing vocabulary across registers (or discourses) is not unusual in the sentimental novel, but it serves to remind us that there is more than one system in which behaviour can be designated as economic – the moral economy, for example; or the domestic, or sentimental. It is important not to make too absolute a division between the sentimental and economic in appraising Fielding's work (or that of other female writers in this period).

Their 'decreasing Fortune' (256) brings David's family to a 'humble Cottage', with just one servant to 'assist in the most laborious Part of their Houshold [*sic*] Work' (260). Their concern now is how to remain viable as an economic (in the financial sense) unit. Valentine, conscious of having been 'bred to no Profession' (263), decides to try his fortune in Jamaica. Fielding plays ironically with the idea of self-sufficiency here, since the means of contributing the resources necessary for the self-sufficient enterprise entails separation and division. Although Valentine is initially hopeful of success and continues to speak of 'them all as one united Family' (285), he dies before he can make his prospects concrete. This erosion of the unit's viability is reflected in David's increasing poverty and his misplaced dependence on the goodwill of Ratcliff and Orgueil for financial assistance. The dismantling of the community is thus occurring at several different

levels: there is the physical separation of its members (made all the more absolute in death); there is the problem of supplying the necessary resources to sustain it; and there is the ambiguous relationship between the values of the community and of those outside it. In terms of how Fielding's work structures models of self-sufficiency, the issue here seems to be less one of how the community's economic enterprise should be regulated (or enterprises, since the regulation of its 'Treasure' within the moral economy remains consistent and sound) – so much as how the practicalities can be addressed. It is in this respect that the *Volume the Last* model looks least secure.

David's role in the community is very much implicated here. Skinner goes so far as to accredit him with destroying the props that support it.³⁵ For all his sincerity and fine intentions, he is too 'simple' to participate in the economic practices of the commercial world. His simplicity is both of the practical kind: how to wield the mechanisms of the prevailing economic system effectively and to his own advantage; and moral: a reluctance to participate in the values of a world from which he has consciously distanced himself. Fielding is more ambiguous about his economic ability *per se*. For example, he is described as often discussing or thinking about 'worldly Affairs' (286). His knowledge of economic practices may be greater than his willingness to play by their rules. Either way, he remains an economic being and his difficulty is one of finding the right means of application to sustain the community's independence. That this endeavour fails is not only due to a clash of values. Fielding certainly depicts the hostile encroachment on David of characters such as Mr Orgueil, whom she describes as intent on keeping 'the Man he called his Friend in Slavery and Dependence', in terms of their holding 'such opposite Views' (287). She also makes this concrete in the dialogue between David

³⁵ Skinner, p.30.

and Mr Nichols, a money-lender to whom David applies for a loan on the security of Valentine's prospects in the West Indies and in which their respective positions on this arrangement are juxtaposed. (As David points out, "'You don't talk our Language, Sir'" (290). But neither does he speak Mr Nichols's.)³⁶ Yet, Fielding also draws attention to how the resources which David and the other members originally brought to the community fare in the changing circumstances of their endeavours to sustain it.

Whilst the financial resources have all but disappeared and the moral resources remain robust, as has been shown, Fielding also attends to the sentimental resources and those associated with the domestic economy, emergent in the book's references to household management. It becomes evident, however, that Fielding is simultaneously engaged by the question of how depleted resources can be replenished when the active means to do so are withheld from the people who need them. Valentine's decision to go to the West Indies is based on the absence of other options given that he has been 'bred to no Profession' (263); David finds himself in what the narrator calls 'a Situation in Life that you know not how to go out of, and yet are not able to support' (276); and at the end of the book, the only surviving adult member of the community, Cynthia, is faced with the prospect of her 'Inability to provide for her Niece'. None of the 'ten thousand Schemes' she 'resolved in her Thoughts' suggest any solution (338). The bleakness of the characters' struggles to make provision for their group is emblemized in the burning of David's house, in which everything he owns is destroyed. His reliance now is on the 'various kinds of Necessaries' (317) sent his family by the people in

³⁶ Nichols refuses to countenance David's assertion that Valentine could not harbour "'the Thought, that he could have any Enjoyment in which I should not have an equal Share'" (290). To Nichols, this is not sound business sense, for "'if this Mr Valentine is a wise Man, he may think it most prudent to keep separately what he hath separately gotten'" (290). See pp 289-91 of *Volume the Last* for the complete dialogue.

the neighbourhood. As it turns out, Cynthia is relieved by a benevolent family whose members promise ‘that she and her Niece Camilla should be taken Care of’ (339). But Fielding’s point is that the self-sufficient endeavour of this community is unsustainable when its members are not equipped to furnish it with the necessary economic resources.³⁷

In an interesting link back to the interpolated narratives of the earlier volumes of *David Simple*, Valentine’s predicament in finding himself excluded from the employment market replicates his sister Camilla’s unsuccessful efforts to surmount the barrier of status in attempting to earn a living. Similarly, David’s predicament – being trapped in a situation where personal considerations are outweighed by practical necessities – replicates Cynthia’s entrapment as a lady’s companion, which she compares to being ‘caught like the poor Fish’ (91). Since Fielding presents David and Valentine as examples of the feminized man of feeling, it is possible to see their roles in *Volume the Last* as versions of those female economic experiences in earlier volumes. (Economic agency is assigned to the male in *Volume the Last*, and it is David and Valentine who are expected to sustain the community financially. As wives and mothers, Camilla’s and Cynthia’s economic roles are allocated to different registers, primarily the moral and domestic.) We might ask what the implications of this are, particularly given that the only surviving members of the community are female.

One way of conducting this investigation is to return to the idea of the fictive economy and how this is structured across the work as a whole. The way in which the interpolated narratives are positioned within this economy suggests one line of enquiry, since, of their nature, they are self-contained units of story, ascribed

³⁷ The idea of the self-sufficient economic community occurs in different forms in other novels of the period. One such is the Millenium Hall community in Sarah Scott’s novel of the same name, which takes a much more positive view of what such an enterprise can achieve, albeit with ample resources. I look at this community in Chapter Three of my study.

to an autonomous narrator, within a wider fictive structure of macro-form and -narrator. Thus, as was argued earlier, they aver their self-sufficiency and, in doing so, posit their own distinctive, self-sufficient narrative economies. At the same time, there is a reciprocal relationship with the macro-structures in terms of the narrating subject's origins in the wider narrative and in relation to the novel's protagonist, David; in other words, she is positioned within the main text before narrating her story. She and her narrative are thus independent entities, but relationally dependent on the fictive economy as a whole. Reciprocity is measured in these narratives' evolution of themes and problems, and their use of techniques and strategies, present in, and important to, the work overall. Instanced here is a further example of the exchange mechanisms discussed earlier, in which the tone is one of sharing. Interpolated narrative and main narrative do not compete and this allows Fielding to deploy the autonomous authority of the female narrating voice and the account of her independent moral and economic enterprise (in Cynthia's and Camilla's stories) free of any tension that might undermine the representation of self-sufficient experience.

However, I suggested earlier that the modelling of self-sufficiency in narrative terms reveals the presence of ambiguities relevant to how the concept is modelled in other economic systems. In *Volume the Last* a form of micro-macro economic relationship different from the narrative kind is presented, in which the community of friends can be said to occupy the position of the interpolated narrative in the earlier volumes. As with the inset stories there, it represents a self-sufficient economic unit within the surrounding economic systems. The relational positionings are different however, and Fielding's project here is to show both the vulnerability of the self-sufficient community and the ambivalence in attitudes towards it.

One of the ways in which Fielding does this is to drop the strategy of using the interpolated narrative in this later volume. This may serve as a technical and formal representation of the friends' separation, since it absents the mode that underpinned their original coming together. But it also removes the emblem of sharing, emphasizing in its place the operations of a different kind of exchange mechanism. This is illustrated by Fielding's ironic inclusion of just one inset narrative, the 'Story of Mrs Tilson', told by Mrs Orgueil who is no friend to the community. Since the story depicts the follies of a generous husband, who ruins his family in order to give support to a friend, and occurs when Mr Orgueil is moving towards offering charitable assistance to David, the narrator's dry comment that 'Mrs Orgueil's Reason for telling this Story is pretty plain' (323) ironizes the narrative act in terms of its motivation. Fielding also ironizes the narrator's strategies, for Mrs Orgueil 'had an Art, by dropping some Circumstances, and altering and adding others, of turning any Story to whatever Purpose she pleased' (323). Tellingly, it is the financial detail that she distorts here, so that the effects of power-based mechanisms on both narrative and money economies are linked and their respective strategies of encroachment and corruption exposed. Mrs Orgueil's distortion of the narrative economy models the distortion – and destruction – of the community's micro-economy.

Of course, Mrs Orgueil's narration is another female-related inset story, though clearly not of the type deployed in the first volumes. If the interpolated narratives can be said to form a continuum within the fictive economy of the *David Simple* narratives as a whole, then Mrs Orgueil's relating of Mrs Tilson's story concludes a span initiated by Cynthia's relation of her own story much earlier. While Mrs Orgueil seeks to manipulate the narrative economy, Cynthia regulates it to reflect her own self-sufficient moral and economic endeavour. While Mrs

Orgueil appropriates (and distorts) another woman's experience, Cynthia claims her autonomous right to present the accuracy of her own experiences. While Mrs Orgueil's intended narratee (Mr Orgueil) does not listen because 'his Thoughts were otherwise employed' (323), Cynthia's narratee (David) is attentive throughout. Thus, in the span of this continuum, Fielding marks her broader exploration of how the ideal model of self-sufficiency gives way in the face of hostile economic forces. She literalizes the hostility in this case by consistently reiterating Mrs Orgueil's 'inexorable Hatred' (337) for Cynthia, a stance that focuses a pervasive antagonism towards the community of which Cynthia is a part. Yet, it is Cynthia alone of the four adult members of the community who survives its destruction. This suggests that something of what is structured in her earlier narration survives with her and withstands the hostile forces deployed in *Volume the Last* and which Mrs Orgueil embodies.

To consider this further, it is worth noting that the continuum of interpolated narratives described above is superseded by a final narrative act with which the work concludes. This is David's death-bed account of his reflections on "'all my past Life'" (340) and is his most sustained narrative act. It is not interpolated, remaining embedded in the texture of the main narrative, but it is distinctive. Although given in direct mode, the omniscient narrator prefaces it by remarking,

I will present my Reader with most of David's own Thoughts, not delivered by him in a long-continued Harangue, but what, at various Times, passed in his Mind, and some part of which fell from his Lips, and is here collected together. (340)

The narrative economy with which he is identified is a sporadic and fragmented one, replicating the now fragmented family economy over which he unsuccessfully

presided. Yet some measure of containment is restored in the omniscient narrator's forging of a cohesive account for David to relate. Significantly, in a mirror reflection of the narrator-narratee positioning in Cynthia's opening interpolated story, it is David who is here the narrator and Cynthia the narratee, delivering a symmetrical and self-sufficient form of closure within the fictive economy.

Fielding's strategies at the end of the work imply that the self-sufficient economies she models are more resilient than is immediately apparent. The model that fares least well is the community of friends insofar as it is a financial economy. This economy is tested by the larger economic systems in its turn and shows how the self-sufficient enterprise fails because it cannot adequately resource itself. In this move from a self-sufficient ideal to its failure, Fielding articulates a recurrent concern of female writers at this time: how women can enact their sense of themselves as economic beings. In the modelling of self-sufficiency, the dynamic between what is desirable and what can be achieved is always present, as the David Simple narratives show. Cynthia's survival emblemizes this, for, as her own narrative shows, she is the novel's most consciously self-sufficient character, in both moral and economic terms. Her enduring presence sustains the project of female self-sufficiency in Fielding's work. Nor is the project limited in the range of economies it explores. As has been shown, the narrative and fictive economies structure their own models of self-sufficiency, and in ways that illuminate the concept as a whole. The next system to be examined here is that of the moral economy, which Fielding deploys in her 1749 work, *The Governess*.

The Governess: 'Mrs Teachum's well-regulated Family'

Fielding's third work was published four years before *Volume the Last* and is noticeably more positive in tone and outcome. Subtitled *Little Female Academy*, it was aimed at girls of school age and conceived as an educational work, offering guidance and advice in a pleasurable form.³⁸ In its use of the school setting, it was unusual for its time, although the education of children was a highly topical issue and conduct advice for women and girls had established its own distinct discourse.³⁹ Within the Academy setting are Mrs Teachum, the Governess of the title, Miss Jenny Peace, who is the oldest of the pupils, then eight further girls whose ages range from eleven down to eight. The impetus of the novel is to effect the transformation of these eight younger girls from a fractious and discontented group into a harmonious and 'well-regulated Family' (113). This is an essentially moral enterprise: Fielding depicts each girl developing for herself a sufficiently aware moral sense to be self-reliant and morally autonomous.

As a moral enterprise, the novel requires distinctive spaces and forms to structure its project. The school setting provides both an architectural and a social space for bringing the girls together in a shared context. Curricular and extra-curricular activities are undertaken jointly and the spatial environment thus organizes the girls' more personal, psychological endeavours. The novel's arrangement in terms of form reflects this. It consists of a wider structure of a main, connecting narrative, which encompasses smaller sections of narrative made up of character portraits, personal histories and fairy tales. A formal pattern quickly emerges: Jenny Peace, or one of the other girls, shares a narrative, the contents are

³⁸ Fielding's Dedication makes clear her aim 'to endeavour to cultivate an early Inclination to Benevolence, and a Love of Virtue, in the Minds of young Women' (xi). All references are to *The Governess* (London and New York: Pandora, 1987) and are cited in the text.

³⁹ Bree situates *The Governess* in terms of the changing attitude to children in the eighteenth century, citing some contemporary educational works for and about children. She suggests John Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* (1744) was a possible model for Fielding's novel. See pp. 58-60 of her study. I discuss the question of female education in detail in Chapter Three of this study.

discussed and a moral drawn which each girl in turn will recognize as having a particular application to herself. Her character description follows and she is prompted to narrate her personal history and identify the processes of her moral self-regulation.

Some features here are shared with the David Simple narratives; the idea of a self-enclosed community determining its own behaviour for example; and the privileging of narrative acts as structuring the procedures of self-regulation. Fielding also sustains in both works her literary interest in depicting ‘the greatest Blessing in this World, namely, a calm and contented Mind’ (71), which she contrasts with the self-tormenting uneasiness of those who are controlled by the passions. However, although the evolution of the community in *The Governess* is similar to that described in the earlier David Simple volumes, this community is a secure one and is not exposed to the destructive encroachments described in *Volume the Last*. Such bleakness of tone would not have been appropriate in a book intended for a younger audience in any case, but it also reminds us that Fielding was interested in exploring different economic systems in *The Governess*. The money economy is present only obliquely: the emphasis falls on the girls’ individual psychological experiences – their personal economies – and how these are organized within the community’s moral economy. School setting and narrative form are part of Fielding’s apparatus for structuring these economies and are, hence, an integral part of how the modelling of self-sufficiency occurs in this work.

The main narrative of *The Governess* is approached via a Dedication and Preface, the former setting out the aims of the work, the latter addressing ‘all my little Readers’ (xv) who are encouraged to reflect on ‘the true Use of Reading’ (xiii) and accept that ‘Pride, Stubbornness, Envy, and, in short, all manner of Wickedness, is the greatest Folly we can be possessed of’ (xv). The novel proper

opens with an account of Mrs Teachum, a widow, who, 'bereft of the Means of her future Support', 'undertook what she was so well qualified for' (2) by establishing a school to educate a fixed quota of nine girls. This, allocated to the adult world, *exemplifies* the oblique presence of the money economy. More particularly, Mrs Teachum is the adult model for 'Dignity', 'Authority' and 'steady Behaviour' (2) to whom the pupils respond with 'Awe' and obedience. Her role in the novel is peripheral in the sense that she appears only when guidance, advice or comment are required. Fielding does not marginalize her, but restricts her authoritative and authorizing presence to maximize the appositeness of its effect. Appropriately, it is the girls' experiences and their *self*-authorizing strategies that are given prominence.

Fielding begins by showing the girls' behaviour before any sense of their being part of a self-sufficient moral community is established. The scene in which they are introduced is subtitled, 'An Account of a Fray, begun and carried on for the sake of an Apple: In which are shewn [*sic*] the sad Effects of Rage and Anger'. The fray is a vicious one, with tearing of hair and clothes, scratching and pinching: 'like so many Cats' (4). The physical and verbal 'Battle' externalizes the girls' internal discontents and makes concrete the folly of vain and selfish desires. Fielding plays comedically with the scene to expose the futility of such behaviour. Pointedly, the girls reject a proposal to divide the apple in eight. In the end, none of them gets it, for Jenny Peace lobs 'the Cause of their Contention' (4) over a hedge. Jenny's name – as all names are in this work – is significant; she is the peacemaker between the girls and she models the peaceable disposition of internal content. It was not always so. As she tells the other girls, she was once prone to 'Stubbornness and Pride' (14), making herself uneasy and rejecting 'the Remedy that was in [her] own Power to remove that Uneasiness' (15). Guided and instructed by her mother, she learns 'to

improve my Understanding, and amend my Heart' (15). It is a lesson in moral conduct above all, one which Jenny now recreates for the younger girls.

The first to benefit is Miss Sukey Jennett. In the wake of the fray, she is full of resentment against her fellow pupils, then against Jenny Peace for making her conscious of her discontent. Fielding gives her a soliloquy in which she is shown struggling between reason and pride. This use of psychological realism is an effective strategy on Fielding's part, underscored by Sukey Jennett's reluctant confession to being in the wrong, which is barely audible. Only in her response to the novel's first main inset narrative, 'The Story of the cruel Giant Barbarico, the good Giant Benefico, and the pretty little Dwarf Mignon', does Sukey find her voice. She recognizes in the tale's thematic enactment of how the mind is made miserable when it indulges thoughts of cruelty and revenge a representation of her own experiences. She gives the other girls an account of her past life, admitting she has 'many and great Faults to confess' and expressing the hope that 'she should, by her true Confessions, set them an Example of Honesty and Ingenuity' (38). She happily acknowledges Miss Jenny's role in effecting this change.

One by one the other girls follow in Sukey Jennett's footsteps. Two further examples will clarify Fielding's strategies here. Miss Dolly Friendly tells the story of Caelia and Chloe, the theme of which is deceit between friends. The narrative's moral leaves an impression on Lucy Sly, who is 'most sensibly touched' (52) by it. She describes how her own life has been founded on deceit, a 'free Confession' (54) for which she is praised by Jenny Peace. Sukey Jennett reads a letter from her cousin telling the story of a Mrs Dison, who has allowed her life to be eaten up with the envy of others' good fortune. This strikes a chord with Patty Lockit, who gives an account of her life, revealing her habit of envying others. She embraces Jenny Peace, thanking her "for having put me into a Way of examining my Heart, and

reflecting on my own Actions; by which you have saved me, perhaps, from a Life as miserable as that of the poor Woman in Miss Sukey's Letter!'" (56-7)

These examples illustrate how all the girls model forms of self-sufficient behaviour. We are made aware of their personal economies and the psychological states between which they move. From being ruled by their passions, each girl progresses to achieving a calm self-possession. It is both an individual and a collective enterprise. At the individual level, each girl is responsible for recognizing herself – or something applicable to herself – in the narratives she hears. She is also responsible for acknowledging this moment of recognition, contextualizing and accounting for it, in a personal narrative of her own. A further responsibility entails a separate narrative act which will allow one of the other girls to follow the same course. Although the presence of the whole group is required, along with the deft management of Jenny Peace to guide it, Fielding always actualizes the girls' psychological and moral progress in terms of its individual texture: Patty Lockett examines her own heart and reflects on her actions; Nanny Spruce rejoices in detecting her own folly; Henny Frett has learned for herself the value of subduing all malice in her mind. In this way, Fielding locates the agency for change in each girl's capacity for moral self-regulation. This is strikingly independent in tone and models a moral self-sufficiency founded on autonomous endeavour.

This model of the morally self-sufficient female clearly represents something of an ideal for Fielding. She expresses it further in the feminocentric structure of the school's moral economy.⁴⁰ Rather like the first *David Simple* volumes, this economy draws on motifs of sharing, supportiveness and reciprocity

⁴⁰ Bree identifies the school as feminocentric and notes the striking fact that the novel does not depict the girls' education in terms of their preparation for courtship and marriage. This is all the more remarkable given that boarding-schools – and female education more generally – usually directed themselves to this end. See Bree, p.64. It follows that Fielding is deploying the school's feminocentricity towards different aspects of female experience.

to characterize its resources, and ratifies itself by deploying similar modes of narrative exchange. However, its relationship to external economic systems is somewhat different; the female experience here is protected by the self-enclosed school environment, a fact Fielding underlines by designating ‘a little Arbour’ (10) as the site of the girls’ meetings over the nine-day span of the book. Within this secure space, they conduct their moral reformation. Yet, if these architectural and spatial structures frame the school’s moral economy, whilst simultaneously locating the individual self-regulation of each girl, it is worth asking whether a dynamic similar to that between the micro- and macro-economies in the *David Simple* narratives is operating here. This requires some further consideration of where and how models of self-sufficiency occur in this work. It also requires some closer scrutiny of the nature and function of the school’s moral economy.

I described this economy above as being feminocentric. This is true both in the sense that it is an all-female community and because its moral atmosphere can be said to derive from its principal, Mrs Teachum. Although Mrs Teachum reposes her trust in Jenny Peace as a suitable guide for the younger girls and is prepared to give her pupils the freedom to work independently towards moral self-knowledge, she occupies the position of moral authority in the novel. Her eye is benevolent, but watchful; her interventions restricted in number, but authoritative; her requirements exacting, but fair. This is only appropriate in an effective teacher of course and it serves to endorse her right to grant and withhold moral approval. Yet, in making Mrs Teachum, in all respects, the supervisor of the school’s moral economy, Fielding exposes a potential anomaly in thematizing the case for individual moral self-sufficiency within a context that has collectivity, inclusiveness and common

consent as its goal.⁴¹ If we look in more detail at Mrs Teachum's role and the nature of her interventions, we can see how Fielding accommodates the anomaly in her modelling of self-sufficiency in this work.

In fact, Mrs Teachum's presence primarily serves to promote Fielding's aim of demonstrating to her young female audience 'what is the true Use of Reading' (xiii). She approves Jenny Peace's plan that the girls should meet in the arbour to read stories together. She requires a daily report of their activities and monitors their reading material. She warns against the 'supernatural Contrivances' (35) of fairy tales, but allows them to read such stories as long as they do so 'with the proper Disposition of Mind not to be hurt by them' (34). Fielding here uses Mrs Teachum to address not only what to read, but *how*. Later, in a rare personal visit to the arbour, Mrs Teachum finds her pupils have been reading a play and tells them that they 'should know something of all kinds of Writings, where neither Morals nor Manners are offended' (101). She asks Sukey Jennett to summarize the play and uses this to instruct the girls in the value of repeating what they read, both to imprint it on the memory and because by 'using yourself to this way of repeating what you have read, you will come to a better manner, and a more regular Method of telling your Story' (104). The novel's structuring of the moral purposes of reading thus makes connections between the appropriateness of matter and content, the correct strategies for extrapolating and applying moral content and the responsibilities of making autonomous acts of narration. This takes place within a context of collectivity, but it is an essentially individual enterprise.

The suggestion here is that Fielding was being consciously non-conflictual in structuring models of self-sufficiency in this work. The mechanics of opposition

⁴¹ This seems to me a crucial factor in determining the nature of female moral self-sufficiency, since the relationship between individual and collective moral codes must always be present. I examine the implications of this potential anomaly in my examination of eighteenth-century female education in Chapter Three of this study.

and juxtaposition found in the David Simple narratives have no place in *The Governess*. The self-enclosed space of the school provides a protective environment, not against the economic systems without, but in harness with the moral economy within. When the girls make visits beyond the school gates, the school economy is ratified not threatened. Their first visit, accompanied by Mrs Teachum, is to a neighbouring dairy-house ‘to eat some Curds and Cream’ (59). The girls are lively, but ‘well-behaved’ (60). On the way back, they meet a beggar and respond with spontaneous benevolence, which Mrs Teachum ‘approved’ (60). They repeat the visit towards the end of the book, this time unaccompanied. This organizational strategy allows the assertion that ‘our good Governess’s Instructions are of more Force with us, than to lose all their Effect when we are out of her Presence’ (112).⁴² Their behaviour is measured by its self-sufficiency and is confirmed, not tested, by being outside the school setting. This is underlined by their visit to ‘a Nobleman’s fine Seat’ (113) on the way home. Amidst its luxury and magnificence, the girls learn that the Lord and Lady of the house are not happy, either in the splendour that surrounds them, nor in each other. ‘Mrs Teachum’s well-regulated Family’ (113) provide the model of contentment in contrast, for, as Jenny Peace points out, ‘there is no Happiness but in the Content of our own Minds’ (114).

The modelling of self-sufficiency in *The Governess* is thus directed towards making moral points suitable for its young readership to imbibe and emulate. By emphasizing atmospheres of reconciliation and harmony, Fielding reveals the novel’s distinctive project to structure a moral economy based on individual and collective responsibilities. The absence of hostility and encroachment from without is appropriate to a work for children. This is not to say the novel presents a fantasy

⁴² The words are spoken by Jenny Peace.

of moral self-reliance, for its presentation of character is marked by psychological realism. Nor does the book avoid all forms of conflict, since it opens with an eight-way catfight and develops its narrative impetus out of each girl's internal disquiet. Indeed, it is on the regulating of inner conflict that the novel's modelling of self-sufficiency is predicated. As in the *David Simple* narratives, these models are structured by means of experiential and interpretive activities that are autonomous in tone and articulated through acts of narration. However, in focusing primarily on self-sufficient behaviour within a moral economy, *The Governess* provides additional, more specifically articulated, models to position alongside those already explored in *David Simple* and *Volume the Last*. How these models fare – how they are evolved, modified or refined – in Fielding's later novels is the subject of the remaining sections of this chapter. In addition, I will be looking more closely at how and why such models can help us understand women's writing and its presentation of female experience in this period.

The History of the Countess of Dellwyn: 'The fatal Effects of indulged Passions'

If we take the girls in *The Governess* (in the fictive sense) as formative models for Fielding's later heroines, Charlotte Lucum in *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn* (1759) and Ophelia Lenox in *The History of Ophelia* (1760), then we might ask how the model of moral self-sufficiency articulated in the earlier work fares in relation to young adult women entering the world for the first time. One line of continuity is immediately present in Fielding's sustained theme of exposing 'the fatal Effects of indulged Passions, and the happy Result of restraining all Passions and Tumults of the human Breast within the proper Limits prescribed

by Reason'.⁴³ But these two late works, the last that Fielding wrote, not unexpectedly use their more complex scope to reproblematicize the presentation of self-sufficiency within – and between – the range of economies they depict.

By the time Fielding published *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn* in 1759, she had experimented with a wide range of fictive forms and modes. Her most unusual work, *The Cry*, appeared in 1754, the year after *Volume the Last*.⁴⁴ Fielding described it as a dramatic fable and used a mixture of omniscient narrative and dramatized scenes to present the story of Portia, who appears before the Cry, in the presence of Truth (Una), to plead the cause of reason, understanding and companionate love. The Cry, which is an assembly of men and women, acting here as a kind of tribunal, have a shared objective 'to support affectation and fallacy, and to oppose simplicity and truth'.⁴⁵ To do otherwise would expose them to the processes of self-discovery, which (unlike the girls in *The Governess*) they are not willing to undergo.⁴⁶ The Cry inverts the school model by using collectivity as a safeguard against individual development; hence, the externalization of conflictual states in the work's dramatized narrative form, with Portia opposing the Cry's moral turpitude with her own calm self-possession.

A similar opposition occurs in Fielding's other intermediate work, *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia*, published in 1757. This work presents, in first person form, the histories of Cleopatra and Octavia 'as supposed to have been delivered by themselves in the Shades below'.⁴⁷ Like *The History of Ophelia*, Fielding's only other work written entirely in the first person, the narrating subject is here engaged

⁴³ *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn*, Preface, p.xvii.

⁴⁴ *The Cry* was probably written in collaboration with Jane Collier.

⁴⁵ *The Cry*, Volume 3, p.294.

⁴⁶ *The Cry* contains the most frequent direct usage of the term 'self-sufficiency' in all of Fielding's works. In most cases it is applied to the behaviour of the Cry and is, of course, used in the pejorative eighteenth-century sense.

⁴⁷ *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* (The Scholartis Press, 1928), p.xliv.

with versions of her past self. Cleopatra's narrative presents the 'true Picture of myself' as an arch-manipulator, who died 'imposing on myself [...] a wretched Sacrifice to [...] Treachery and Ambition'.⁴⁸ Octavia's presents 'a faithful Narration of my Life' in which 'My chief Care was to keep my Mind composed and undisturbed'.⁴⁹ Her death was peaceful, bringing with it 'the Reward of conscious Virtue'.⁵⁰ These contrasting histories offer different versions of femininity, but they also allow Fielding to find a new narrative form to present her continuing engagement with exploring individual states of mind and the psychological and moral modelling this generates.

Whilst *The Governess*, *The Cry* and *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* deploy their respective forms to position an exploration of individual subjectivities, *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn* is reminiscent of the David Simple narratives in its use of a more conventionally linear narrative, omniscient narrator and subtly ironic tone. What all these works share is their psychological realism: the respectively fabulistic and fictive-historical forms of *The Cry* and *The Lives*, for example, heighten the realistic exposure of their subjects' minds by means of their formal conceits. Thus, form for Fielding served as an organizational strategy for presenting the specific project of each work; defining its nature and organizing its scope. In *The Countess of Dellwyn*, the psychological realism remains as we are given access to Charlotte Lucum's internal life and moral endeavours, but Fielding uses the narrative scope of the more conventional form to mark her return to exploring female experiences in the widest possible range of economic systems.

The novel tells the story of Charlotte Lucum, a motherless girl of seventeen when her history begins, brought up in the country by her father and happy to

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp.1 and 146 respectively.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp.147-48.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.183.

remain there. Mr Lucum is consumed by ambition for social and political advancement, however, and arranges a marriage between his daughter and the elderly, decrepit Lord Dellwyn. Charlotte resists at first, but a period spent amidst the fashionable, public amusements of London disrupts her capacity for quiet reflection, awakens her vanity and fills her with envy for status and wealth. She consents to the marriage, which is a failure. Led on by her vanity, the Countess pursues pleasure and intrigue, eventually furnishing Lord Dellwyn with the necessary grounds for divorcing her. Publicly shamed, she flees to France, where she drifts from place to place, dreading her own company. There is no closure to Charlotte's story.

Alongside this central narrative strand, Fielding develops other stories, character sketches and narratorial analyses of social and moral behaviour. The most important sub-plot concerns the Bilson family and the courtship between Miss Bilson and Sir Harry Cleveland. Apparently the ideal and sentimentally conventional antidote to Charlotte's cautionary tale, the Bilson narrative is overtly rooted in the register of the money economy and Fielding is intriguingly non-explicit about signalling the links between the two. Unravelling the interplay between them will be one of the concerns of my present discussion. Before this, however, and in order to examine the place of self-sufficiency in this work and how it is modelled across a range of economies, my discussion begins with Charlotte Lucum and asks in what sense she can be regarded as an economic being.⁵¹

⁵¹ With the exception of Skinner, this is not a question raised by other critics of the novel. Indeed, as a whole, critical commentary on this work is limited both in quantity and quality. Schofield, Downs-Miers and Spencer give only brief accounts which focus on giving readings of the novel's moral project. Bree's discussion offers a more sustained commentary on the work's treatment of marriage (see pp. 125-34) and, more interestingly, investigates the Bilson subplot as offering an alternative model of female experience, though she is curiously reticent about considering the economic dimension to this. It is precisely this dimension that interests Skinner and she places Mrs Bilson's story at the centre of how Fielding's novels reveal economic problems that contest the coherence of the sentimental model. See pp.31-36.

At a first impression, the evidence looks thin. Prior to her marriage, Charlotte is a sober country girl, living a quiet, isolated existence, until the lure of wealth and luxury seduces her into becoming Countess of Dellwyn. A standard reading might construe this in terms of the unworldly, economically ignorant female being corrupted by economic systems of which she has no understanding. However, Fielding does not encourage the limitations of such a reading. As in her other works, her fictive strategies are used to position her female characters amidst a range of economic atmospheres and behaviours. Fielding gives an emphatic instance of this in the novel's opening pages, where the action could hardly be more *in medias res*, for we start in the middle of the marriage between Charlotte and Lord Dellwyn. Fielding is here being both tonally and structurally provocative. The grotesquerie of Lord Dellwyn's arrival in a wheeled 'Machine, invented for the Assistance of Imbecility' (1.2) to seize on his 'destined Prey' (1.4) (who is nevertheless coolly collected) tellingly confirms Fielding's deliberate inversion of the conventions of the courtship plot leading to closure in marriage. By replacing closure with *exposure*, Fielding questions the nature of marriage itself. The grotesque disparity between bride and groom in this opening scene shows us this is not a sentimental transaction. Moreover, the bride shows no distress – neither as a result of coercion, nor of resigned filial obedience. We are being presented with a consensual economic transaction. Yet, the ironic tone alerts us to reserve judgement at this stage. It also alerts us to the ambiguities in Charlotte's calm consent to the marriage and the economic knowingness her presence and demeanour imply.

In the chapters following this bravura opening, the events leading to the marriage are revealed. Charlotte, we learn, has been living the ideal economic existence, in the sense of its exemplary domestic and moral regulation. This comprises 'early Hours, constant Employment, and a regular Manner of Life'

(1.36). She is a careful mistress of self, time and space; self-sufficient, one might say, in terms of managing her resources within the domestic and moral economies. This model of female self-control is contrasted with Fielding's portrait of the profligate English gentleman who destroys his constitution and his fortune by irregular living; a course of action that has repercussions for the 'Poor, who belong to the Places where his Property lies, by draining away all his Money' (1.14). Charlotte's model of domestic regularity meets this exemplar of irresponsible profligacy in Lord Dellwyn, and is disrupted by it. This is unexpected on conventional novelistic grounds, where model femininities more typically reclaim and reform. But Fielding has already shown her intention of inverting such conventions. Accordingly, Charlotte is shown as being seduced by her exposure to the fashionable life of London. She goes from indifference to 'all the gay Scenes' (1.32-33), through a restless frustration at 'being Mistress of no one Moment of her Time' (1.36), to an 'Uneasiness' (1.36) at the constant stimuli of public amusements, until her 'Power of Reflection' (1.40) is lost and she becomes 'totally changed' (1.43). By showing us the processes of this change, Fielding is able to retain moral sympathy for her heroine's predicament, if not always her conduct. Clearly this is important for making evaluative responses to Charlotte's history. Yet, by using the locus of the heroine's mind, once 'resigned and well-regulated', now 'turmoiling and bustling' (1.53) to display the effects of this predicament, Fielding also suggests a methodology for considering Charlotte as an economic being.

First of all, the presentation, by stages, of Charlotte's alteration exposes not only how she is changed, but what she is changed from. It is a reverse form of the moral journey made by the girls in *The Governess* and it requires the dismantling of self-sufficient female – or feminized – economies associated with moral and

domestic experience. The mind, as a private, internal, self-regulating space, is emblematic of this. When Fielding writes of Charlotte's change 'that it would have puzzled any of the Philosophers, who have written on the Subject of Identity, to have discovered whether or no she was the same Person' (1.43), she is commenting on how the integrity of the personal economy – the synthesizing of one's characteristic resources of whatever kind – is disrupted. Foreshadowing her later marital divorce, Charlotte is divorced from herself and this is shown as implicating her former ability to regulate her moral and domestic conduct. By exposing her heroine in this way, Fielding reveals that women had an economic presence within a range of different systems and that their handling of these economies was a crucial aspect of female experience.

At the same time, Fielding touches on the financial register in these pre-marital stages of Charlotte's history. Appropriately enough, this kind of economic knowledge is at first shown as working only obliquely in Charlotte's mind. Textually, it is deployed around her rather than within. Nevertheless, her initial rejection of the Dellwyn marriage as 'Prostitution' (1.30) suggests an economic judgement as much as a moral one. It also suggests Charlotte's awareness that, as a young, marriageable woman, she occupies a distinctive space in female experience, though it is left to the narrator to make this more explicit in terms of its economic and sexual categorization.⁵² The impression is confirmed in the vocabulary Fielding uses after the marriage has taken place. Now 'under an Obligation to live a Lye [*sic*]' (1.94), Charlotte finds herself unpractised in the 'Commerce' (1.95) of falsehood and ill-adept 'in the new Trade she had undertaken' (1.98). Furthermore, her marriage itself is described as the 'Tax she must pay for the Indulgence of her

⁵² In my discussion of France's Brooke's writings (Chapter Two), I show how the structuring of female experience in terms of sexual categories – virgin, wife, mother, widow and 'old maid' – can yield valuable readings of how women are constructed economically.

fancied Scheme of Happiness' (1.100). This positioning of Charlotte by means of particular economic terms and concepts produces new resonances in how the novel's opening sections are organized.

In fact several important shifts have occurred. Fielding first presents the changed Charlotte Lucum, next accounts for the change, then explores its repercussions. The reader is positioned to observe the pre-marriage Charlotte as a model of self-sufficiency, which is then disrupted. Female vanity is targeted as one of the disruptive forces, but so are the economic mechanisms of elite marriages. Charlotte recognizes the marriage as a form of trade, but, in her vanity, expects to play it at its own game. This gives her economic awareness an ambiguous dimension, a fact compounded by Fielding's tonal ambivalence and use of irony in this work. Charlotte simultaneously elicits sympathy for being sacrificed to the schemes of her ambitious father and unsavoury suitor and to being unwary of the corruptions of public life – Fielding clearly satirizes both – but is rendered suspect by her vanity and lack of self-control. Tonal registers are finely poised, creating shifts and ambivalences between these two perspectives. Charlotte's internal sufferings in health and peace of mind are genuine, but the narrator relates them with detachment and a sometimes comedic edge, with Charlotte being described as 'Husband-sick' (1.112). The purpose is ultimately satiric, to expose the conditions that create such marriages, but it also has the effect of ironizing Charlotte's economic experience; and hence ironizing her as an economic being.

To consider how and why this happens, we need to look at alternative female experiences in this novel. Mrs Bilson's story is the most important sub-plot. It is told by the omniscient narrator and appears half-way through the first volume with almost no introduction or preparatory embedding in the main narrative. As distinct from her earlier narrative practices, Fielding positions no narratees within

the novel, a strategy which is ironic in itself and which I will return to later. The narratees are the novel's readers and they are largely left to infer the comparative agenda of sub- and main plot. A further characteristic of Mrs Bilson's story is that, although it is positioned within a moral and religious framework, it presents, in essence, one woman's economic history.

Mrs Bilson's story relates how she was brought up and educated by her father following her mother's death. She is sought after by Mr Bilson, whom her father does not consider rich enough to marry her. Only the fear of exposing his daughter to 'the Danger of Dependence' [*sic*] (1.159) after his death persuades him to change his mind. The marriage is happy at first, but Mr Bilson's pursuit of pleasure undermines it. When he is imprisoned for debt, Mrs Bilson assumes complete economic responsibility for herself, her husband and children. This she does with industry, working hard and earning money, whilst retaining her domestic excellence as wife and mother. She is rewarded with a legacy from a distant relative which allows her to initiate a different form of economic enterprise – charitable schemes and active benevolence.

Mrs Bilson clearly represents a different model of economic behaviour from Charlotte. This in part derives from their respective positions in terms of wealth and social status, which is covertly acknowledged in Mrs Bilson's setting up of 'a portable Shop' (1.180) from which fashionable people buy. In fact it is in itself 'a Fashion to buy of her' because of her 'Novelty' (1.187) as a genteel woman productively addressing her reduced circumstances. Yet, she and Charlotte are linked at the level of their self-sufficiency within the moral and domestic economies. The difference, as we have seen, is that this self-sufficiency is disrupted in Charlotte, whilst, in Mrs Bilson's case, it forms the basis of her success in supporting her family financially. Her domestic behaviour is founded on good sense

and vigilant 'Frugality' (1.166). Aware of her husband's increasing coldness, she studies 'not to convert his Indifference into Aversion' (1.164). After his arrest, she tells him she is not ashamed 'of labouring for the Support of herself and Children', particularly since she is 'at an Age when she was able to gain her own Subsistence' (1.176). Her domestic virtues inform her economic conduct, which is characterized in terms of its maturity.

Fielding uses Mrs Bilson's story to ironize Charlotte's economic behaviour. Unlike Mrs Bilson's self-sufficiency, Charlotte's is shown as incomplete, unable to withstand the forces that test it. In fact Fielding does not seek to persuade us in the early chapters that Charlotte will stand firm. The ironic tone and revelatory opening chapter discourage such a reading. Charlotte's self-sufficiency thus acquires the look of an incidental construction rather than an active, independent form of behaviour. The effect of the irony is not to produce a personal attack on Charlotte, but to complicate the modelling of women's economic and self-sufficient presence in the work. Charlotte's case has proved misleading: the model of self-sufficiency she held out did not prove viable. Significantly, Fielding does not seek to resolve this. One obvious means to do so, namely to position Charlotte as a narratee of Mrs Bilson's story in order to re-model her economic and moral behaviour, is eschewed by Fielding, with conscious irony. It is left to the reader to draw parallels, and the effect is to re-emphasize Charlotte's divergent course. This is confirmed in Fielding's decision not to bring Charlotte's story to closure, a re-enactment in the novel's form of her failed self-sufficiency.

It is worth noting that this is not the only example in the novel of such a strategy. In the second volume, we are introduced to Miss Weare, who is well-born and genteel, but 'with too small a Fortune to support her with any tolerable Convenience, much less like a Gentlewoman' (2.217). This looks like a restatement

of Fielding's earlier treatment of such women in *David Simple*, recalling Camilla's words that 'there is no Situation so deplorable, no Condition so much to be pitied, as that of a Gentle-woman in real Poverty' (132). It also reminds us of Mrs Bilson's predicament. Yet Fielding quickly explodes these parallels by assigning the presentation of Miss Weare to the same tonal register as Charlotte. Miss Weare's initial efforts to hold out for marriage are described with an irony which serves to increase the impression of her conduct as equivocal. In the end she accepts an offer to become Charlotte's companion, preferring worldly status to moral character, and her reputation is destroyed by association. The effect of the irony is to expose the moral weakness behind such decisions. Yet, as in Charlotte's case, Fielding is not ready to withhold all sympathy from Miss Weare and she shows her wishing 'she had rather submitted to the meanest Employment [...] than taken up the Trade of being an humble Companion' (2.282).

In this way Fielding cultivates ambivalence and ambiguity in her presentation of moral and economic themes. In describing both Charlotte's marriage and Miss Weare's position as a companion as 'Trade', Fielding satirically hints at an economic exploitation for which neither woman should be completely condemned. The causes lie outside themselves. What they *are* responsible for is putting economic cupidity before personal and moral integrity. Yet even here Fielding can be ambiguous about why this occurs, something she expresses in her linking of these two women's fates in a plot strand she declines to resolve. By leaving us uncertain whether these characters are to be condemned or pitied, Fielding skilfully assigns our attention to those areas of the novel where alternative forms of female economic behaviour are depicted; and where resolution *is* offered. It is in those places, too, that we are shown most clearly how Fielding is modelling self-sufficiency in this work.

While Mrs Bilson's story is the novel's most important alternative account of female moral and economic behaviour, Fielding includes other examples too. One such concerns the history of Miss Cummys. Brought up with two cousins, all of them poor, Miss Cummys relates how they did not 'think it the least beneath us to undertake any decent Employment to support Ourselves' (2.173). She is grateful to receive charity where it is genuinely and benevolently proffered and finds consolation from religion following the death of her cousins. Her history compliments Mrs Bilson's in its relating of her calm endeavour for self-support and its emphasis on Christian precepts. It suggests an alternative model to Miss Weare's eschewing of 'decent Employment'. It also presents an alternative to Charlotte's internal disquiet in 'the Placidness of [Miss Cummys'] Countenance, and the Tranquillity of her Mind' (2.169). This is described as a wonder to Charlotte, who, interestingly – and in contrast to Mrs Bilson's story earlier – *is* positioned as a narratee of this history, which is related in the first person. We are therefore shown the direct impact of the alternative model of female behaviour on Charlotte. Her response is to weep in comparing how Miss Cummys has retained her peace of mind 'whilst she had rendered herself so miserable' (2.187). The self-awareness hinted at here suggests that her position as a narratee will lead to a 'right Reflection on her own Conduct' (2.187), with some productive outcome; but, in fact, vanity continues to prevail and her former self-sufficiency moves even further beyond recall.

What these different versions of female experience show, then, is a modelling of self-sufficiency based on strength of mind and character; which predicates economic behaviour on moral behaviour and which demonstrates a resilience to encroachment by means of an actively averred sense of individual worth and independent behaviour. While Mrs Bilson and Miss Cummys combat

economic depredation in this way, Miss Weare and, more significantly, Charlotte capitulate to the lure of worldly gratification. Charlotte's downfall looks more tragic in the light of this, for her lingering capacity for reflection keeps alive in her, and in the reader, an awareness of what has been lost. She knows she is in part responsible for her predicament, but lacks the will to address this. Both as a state and as an active force, her earlier self-sufficiency is gone.

However, Fielding uses Charlotte's somewhat anomalous position to show, by her loss of it, the value to women of a self-sufficient capability. The novel's different versions of how women experience what it is to be an economic being reveal the distinctive vulnerabilities that beset them. Charlotte may be the dupe of her own vanity, but she is sold into marriage because of her father's ambition; Mrs Bilson is plunged into poverty by her husband's ruinous behaviour; Miss Weare and Miss Cummys are left without fortune and dependent. All these situations require a particular kind of female resilience. Furthermore, as Fielding shows, economic opportunities for women were limited, as were the circumstances in which they could act as economically autonomous agents.⁵³ Mrs Bilson's history is, therefore, an economic success story, a fact Fielding ratifies in her account of the enterprises she and her reformed husband establish with the money they inherit. Whilst living within 'very moderate Bounds' themselves (1.203-4), the Bilsons free deserving cases from the Fleet, pay debts, 'form[ed] Seminaries for young People' (1.205) and encourage interdependence between those they help. In a foreshadowing of Sarah Scott's novel, *Millenium Hall* (1762), 'They hired a large House as a Receptacle for Gentlewomen, who either had no Fortunes, or so little that it would not support them' (1.207). These are women like Miss Cummys and Miss Weare. Fielding thus situates female self-sufficiency on a cusp between necessity and individual

⁵³ This is the theme I develop in my next chapter. Widowhood was one of the few instances where women had a legal identity and were able to act independently.

enterprise. This allows her to argue that, in a climate which limits the scope of economically necessitous women and where moral integrity is vulnerable to compromise, a self-sufficient capability is something of a female prerequisite.

In making this claim, it is noticeable that Fielding codifies outcomes of self-sufficient behaviour by placing them in a moral dimension. Mrs Bilson's charitable schemes demonstrate this, the 'utmost Oeconomy' (1.206) with which they are managed being an extension of her morally approved 'domestic Virtue' (1.165) and 'Frugality' (1.166). Moreover, the narrator, in the novel's only explicitly made link between Mrs Bilson's story and Charlotte's, notes the 'Proof of the Efficacy of religious Principles towards extracting the sharpest Sting from the highest Adversity' in the former, whilst 'Lady Dellwyn's Story illustrates the Power of Vanity to bring to nothing every real Advantage' (1.215). A similar juxtaposition, also within the moral dimension, occurs in the stories of Miss Cummys and Miss Weare. It is not surprising, then, that the novel finds its closure in the moral domain of the more conventional courtship plot, with which Charlotte's story, in comparison, declines to co-operate. The marriage of Miss Bilson to Sir Harry Cleveland is achieved only after the latter completes a period of probation to prove he has the necessary steadiness of character to match Miss Bilson's prudence and moral worth. Significantly, the married couple model themselves on Mrs and (the reformed) Mr Bilson and the novel celebrates their charity and virtue as 'a Blessing to the World from Generation to Generation' (2.291) in its closing sentence.

Yet it is by no means apparent that Fielding is codifying self-sufficient behaviour within a moral framework in order to effect special pleading for women's economic claims. Rather, it is a strategy to suggest the interdependence of economic and moral behaviour, with self-sufficiency as the governing principle. In other words, Fielding's focus is on self-sufficiency as a mode of behaviour in its

own right, irrespective of the dimension to which it is applied. The capacity to command and manage resources, be they internal or external, in the form of mental life, of moral values or of money, is what the novel is investigating, with the female histories it contains comparing those who have the capacity with those who do not.

In the light of this, the ending of the novel looks both more interesting and more problematic, for rather than one, closed plot strand offering a corrective to another, unconcluded strand, we are instead left with different versions of how female self-sufficiency fares. The failure in the fictive resources of Charlotte's story to achieve narrative closure replicates Charlotte's personal loss of a self-sufficient capacity and further ironizes her economic and moral progress in the novel. But, in contrast with the closure in the Bilson strand, with its conventional fictive resolution, one cannot help but feel that Charlotte's story, in a representative sense at least, gets closer to depicting the real difficulties of women in practising the autonomous behaviour that self-sufficiency structures. Fielding's own ambivalence – and her use of irony and ambiguity – in presenting Charlotte's story would seem to underline this point.

The modelling of self-sufficiency in *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn* shows us how this concept is important to understanding the work of women writers, and their depicting of female experience, during this period. It opens a conceptual route to considering women as economic beings, with an economic capability, by predicating this capacity on their position and behaviour within other dimensions. Fielding's engagement with the nature of this presence is an interest that recurs throughout novels of this period, as is her exploration of women's economic predicament. In her final novel, *The History of Ophelia* (1760), with which this chapter concludes, Fielding presents one of her most intriguing models of the self-sufficient female. This will have additional relevance in formulating self-

sufficiency as a critical concept, for the novel's heroine is an extreme version of the ideal female brought up in domestic seclusion: her morality has no concept of vice and her awareness of the world has no economic dimension and no concept of money.

The History of Ophelia: 'Making my own Mind wiser'

The History of Ophelia is a first person narrative, written in the form of an extended letter to a correspondent identified only as 'your Ladyship', in which the narrator, Ophelia Dorchester, presents and evaluates her earlier life as Ophelia Lenox.⁵⁴ The novel has been read as the most conventional of Fielding's works, securely within the sentimental fiction mould; yet recent criticism, including that of Downs-Miers and Bree, is rightly alert to Fielding's deft manipulation of the conventions. Both the editorial apparatus with which the work opens, which claims the manuscript was found in an 'old Buroe' and may or may not be 'fictitious' (Advertisement), and the extreme innocence of the heroine suggest some parodic disingenuousness on Fielding's part.⁵⁵ Her varying of the tonal register from the disturbingly grotesque to the visually comedic, confirms this impression. As with *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn*, Fielding is playing with conventions of form and style to activate a more complex reading of the heroine's experiences.

⁵⁴ The edition used is *The History of Ophelia*, in 2 volumes (London: R. Baldwin, 1760). Further references are to this edition. It is possible to read this work as a version of Richardson's 1740-1 novel *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, in which the morally virtuous servant girl withstands the sexual and economic encroachments of the aristocratic male. The forms of Pamela's resistance become the procedures by which she reforms Mr B - , culminating in their marriage. Although the tonal registers of Fielding's novel are different – not least in her depiction of a heroine who avoids the archness and knowingness some have found in Pamela – there are similarities in structure and in the sexual and economic organization of Ophelia's relationship with Lord Dorchester.

⁵⁵ The discovered manuscript or the ordering of private papers into a coherent narrative were common devices of the time. The education of a naïve and unpractised heroine in the ways of the world was a favourite plot outline. Examples of the latter include Maria Villiers in Frances Brooke's *The Excursion*, Evelina in Burney's novel of the same name (both of which are discussed later in this study) and Catherine Morland in Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. However, Fielding's Ophelia caps all of them in sheer ignorance of the world.

Ophelia follows the fictionally standard progress from naïve ignorance to social- and self-awareness; but Fielding leaves us in no doubt that it is Ophelia's economic education that is crucial to the successful outcome of this progress.

The novel relates how the orphaned Ophelia is brought up by an aunt, who, disgusted by the deceit implicit in masculine power when her husband proves to be a bigamist, removes herself and her charge to a rural idyll in Wales. In this tranquil setting, Ophelia's education is thorough in some respects, but omits all reference to 'the existence of Vices, which a pure Imagination, untaught by Observation and Experience, cannot represent to itself' (1.12). The remote cottage is happened on by Lord Dorchester, a 'strange Phantom' (1.14) in Ophelia's eyes, since Miranda-like, she has scarcely seen a man before and has no knowledge of the sexual male. He is reciprocally enchanted by Ophelia and abducts her. He introduces her to the fashionable world and intends her, in due course, to become his mistress, relying on his belief in the inevitability of female sexual frailty to effect these plans. In the meantime, and in order not to put her on her guard, he must preserve her simplicity and disguise from her the impropriety of their physical and social proximity. Through a variety of adventures, Ophelia suspects nothing. Only when a friend of Lord Dorchester's reveals his true intentions is she enlightened. Lord Dorchester reforms his principles and the two finally marry, although Ophelia regards her agreement to the marriage as showing 'Imprudence' (2.233).

The novel, then, opens by placing Ophelia in a context of paradisaical innocence, living a pastoral existence in a rural cottage remote from the world. This evokes a particular kind of economic self-sufficiency, although Fielding is subtle in how she conveys this.⁵⁶ Whilst rural homesteads in this period structured a

⁵⁶ Gillian Skinner discusses Ophelia's rural upbringing as positing a 'prelapsarian economic model' based on complete sufficiency, without the taint of money or exchange. (See Skinner, p 47) She argues that this authorizes Ophelia's commentary on the corrupting effects of mid-eighteenth-

household economy based on a range of resources, from paid labour and selling home produce at market to supplying food from gardens and domestic animals, Ophelia and her aunt seem only to engage in the last of these activities.⁵⁷ Fielding appears to be interested more in the *tone* of their self-sufficiency than in its practicalities, a fact she emphasizes in her depiction of Lord Dorchester's reactions to this cottage way of life. His delight in the simplicity, novelty and cleanliness he finds there and his identification of Ophelia as 'Treasure' (1.16) are part of a self-created fantasy to which he readily succumbs. In his enchantment, he follows the women about as they attend to their 'Domestick Cares' (1.22) of feeding their goats and poultry. Fielding here uses tone and action to suggest a version of self-sufficiency that is both literally and, more crucially, figuratively removed from reality. The rest of the novel seeks to explore the effects of replacing the tone with the substance.

As a first step in substantiating her modelling of self-sufficiency in this work, Fielding shows Ophelia's unfolding reactions to the world beyond her isolated cottage after she has been abducted by Lord Dorchester. Initially, these responses are reminiscent of Gulliver's in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, blending realism and fantasy in perspectival misreadings: 'a most stupendous Building' is, by a normal reckoning, only 'a moderate sized House' (1.37); a 'sumptuous Palace' (1.37) is no more than a common inn; and what Ophelia receives as the 'indefatigable Hospitality' of the inn's owners she learns is the effect of 'mere Trade' (1.39). In these scenes, Fielding purposely focuses on Ophelia's exposure to signs of status and wealth and the effects on human behaviour of money-based

century economic (and social) systems. My own argument is more concerned with how Ophelia's experiences in the world evolve the novel's modelling of self-sufficiency in relation to those systems. It is, therefore, both a refinement and an extension of Skinner's discussion.

⁵⁷ A full account of the eighteenth-century household economy is given in Chapter Four of this study, where it is discussed as part of women's work roles.

systems of exchange. The first person narrative voice positions the reader so as to be simultaneously amused by Ophelia's ignorance and mindful of her evaluative perspective. This classic tactic of irony emerges at strategic moments during the narrative. For example, Ophelia looks at the way fashionable people dress and 'could not help being struck at the Resplendency of all the Ornaments I beheld', signalling the comparison with her own notions of dress as 'the homeliest Garb' (1.46). Yet, when she later reaches London, she describes how 'Every Gewgaw charmed me; every tawdry Shop amazed me' (1.127). We are aware of the pejorative overtones to her words and this allows us to gauge the progress of her moral and economic evaluations. The irony is all the more to the fore if we consider that Fielding is using Ophelia's responses to the world's social, moral and economic values to effect a revision, albeit more complex and sustained, of Lord Dorchester's evaluation of her in *her* world of rural self-sufficiency, in which he designated her as 'Treasure' and nothing more. Certainly, those points in the novel which are most overtly concerned with money and which evoke the nature of Ophelia's economic presence involve both her and Lord Dorchester. It is here that the route of Ophelia's economic education can be traced and where she learns to measure and assert the scope of her self-sufficiency.

Three scenes in the novel explore these issues. They each involve monetary exchanges – or would-be exchanges – and each leads to a revision in the characters' perceptions of, or the novel's engagement with, an aspect of moral or economic behaviour. In the first, Lord Dorchester presses on Ophelia a sum of money for her own use. She wishes to refuse it as 'an unnecessary Burden' invoking her understanding of sufficiency as being 'amply supplied with all it [money] could purchase' (1.62) to demonstrate that it has no relevance to her. Fielding deftly restates the legacy of Ophelia's cottage upbringing in this allusion to a self-

sufficiency that is ‘amply supplied’ but does not consider by what means. A similar thing occurs when, having accepted the money, Ophelia gives it away to those she imagines to be needy. The pleasure the recipients show persuades her of the ‘Value of the Treasure’ (1.62) she gives. This echoes Lord Dorchester’s estimation of her as ‘Treasure’ and indicates that some re-conceptualizing of the term is required if misappropriations are not to occur. In Ophelia’s case, her shocked realization that the indiscriminate laying out of money, even in charity, contributes only ‘to the increase of Vanity and Laziness’ (1.63) teaches her to take time and care to learn how ‘to relieve real Distress’ (1.75). As she tells Lord Dorchester, she has spent the money ““in buying Experience, in making my own Mind wiser, and that of some others easier”” (1.74-75).

Monetary exchange is here undergoing an intricate sequence of conversions. Lord Dorchester’s pressing on Ophelia of money she does not want metaphorically recalls the power he has over her, both as male and abductor. The recurrence of the treasure motif reminds us that Ophelia is ‘Treasure’ to Lord Dorchester; treasure that converted to plunder at the point of his abduction of her. Her own revisions of the meaning of ‘Treasure’ – she concludes in the end that she ‘could not be quite pleased with the Invention of Coin’ (1.76) – implicitly challenge Lord Dorchester to reformulate *his*. Furthermore, if Lord Dorchester uses his economic power to make trade in Ophelia’s ignorance, she uses his money to exchange part of that ignorance for experience. At the same time, she grasps the terminology of his economic system, referring to her new understanding of money’s ‘ready Exchange [...] for all Commodities’ and its appeal ‘to the Vain and Voluptuous’ (1.76). In comparing this, in surprise, with ‘the plain Simplicity in which I had been bred’ (1.76), she again juxtaposes sufficiency with superfluity. Fielding thus presents Ophelia’s entry into the world of Lord Dorchester’s economic values in order to show her re-

defining its terms. The converting of Lord Dorchester's money in ways he could not have anticipated signals a revision of his representative authority. However, Ophelia also finds herself investigating new concepts, including those of money and the nature of sufficiency. This marks the texture of her own self-sufficiency developing into something more substantial.

The second scene occurs after Ophelia has again been abducted, this time by the Marchioness of Trente, and not as 'Treasure', but as a rival for Lord Dorchester's love. Imprisoned in the Marchioness's castle, a melancholy and neglected place of Gothic propensities, Ophelia meditates escape plans. In the end, the Marchioness proposes to "buy her off". She offers Ophelia money to relinquish her interest in Lord Dorchester, with the added condition that Ophelia should not go within forty miles either of London or of Lord Dorchester's country seat. Ophelia refuses. She avers, 'I was under no Apprehension that want of Virtue could be the Consequence of want of Money, and, therefore, saw no sufficient Inducement to accept any, from one who had so cruelly injured me' (2.56). Ophelia thus separates 'Virtue' and 'Money' into two discrete camps in expressing her intent to avoid complicity with the Marchioness. But the syntactical echo in her words suggests her awareness that virtue and money, that is the moral and the economic, stand in a particular kind of relationship to each other.

Ophelia discredits the assumption that money can disrupt moral integrity. By imbuing her rejection with the sense of injury done to her, Ophelia suggests a personal resistance to the power that has been used, not only in the form of abduction and imprisonment, but also in the economic power of the Marchioness's proposition. Ophelia counters this power by asserting her own sense of what is appropriate morally and economically. This self-sufficient response is interestingly positioned by Fielding since it is articulated as part of an exchange, putative though

it proves to be, between two women. While its motive is sexual rivalry, its conditions are not sexual in themselves, suggesting that, in some form, the scene stands as a version of Ophelia's self-sufficient existence with her aunt, with the effect of marking the evolution of her self-sufficiency from tone to substance. However, in depicting the masculine nature of the Marchioness's power, not least in her replication of the very forms Lord Dorchester had himself earlier wielded, Fielding seems to be using this scene to prepare Ophelia for finally confronting and converting Lord Dorchester's perception of her in the novel's closing stages. The fact that this later scene, the third to be discussed here, depicts a financial proposal in its turn, would seem to endorse this, particularly as it is by her refusal to comply with its terms that Ophelia asserts the full scope of her self-sufficiency.

By the point at which the third scene occurs, Ophelia has discovered Lord Dorchester's plans to make her his mistress and not his wife. In an overheard conversation, she has learned the details of an economic arrangement he intends on her behalf, namely a settlement "“which shall render her perfectly independent of me”" (2.175). As will be shown, his use of the term 'independent' becomes central to the debate structured in the final sections of the novel. In the meantime, Ophelia's response is to flee, intent on returning to her cottage "“where I shall behold no Actions but what are just and consistent”" (2.194). This looks like a deliberate juxtaposition of two forms of economy, measured in both moral and financial terms, where rural self-sufficiency operates as a corrective to worldly corruption. However, such a direct comparison oversimplifies matters, and Fielding is much more ambiguous in the conclusions she leaves us to draw. Two points will illustrate this.

First of all, in this scene Lord Dorchester tracks Ophelia down and renews his offer to render her 'the Disposal of half his Fortune to make me less dependant'

(2.238). He accompanies this with a long-delayed proposal of marriage. His objections to marriage are in fact sincerely held; he believes it to be a specious custom, in which feelings are compelled for the sake of worldly interest. Yet his impulse to ensure Ophelia's financial independence sits ambiguously with his own compelling of her moral independence, not to mention the power he has used to acquire ascendancy over her. Drawing on her earlier responses to the Marchioness's proposals, Ophelia rejects his offer of marriage, declaring that 'Custom had not confounded my Ideas of Right and Wrong' and that to marry someone she knows to be guilty of vice 'was, in a Degree, to become vicious'; just as to sacrifice her moral integrity would be to declare it not 'sufficiently strong' (2.248). In other words, Ophelia's assertion of moral self-sufficiency obliges Lord Dorchester to pay heed to her conceptualizing of independence by revising his own. As he acknowledges: '“he could not live without me, and should gratefully receive me *on my own Terms*”' (2.241). (My emphasis.)

Secondly, Fielding is ambiguous about whether this can be taken as a straightforward case of feminine morality reforming masculine behaviour, a conventional novelistic strategy. The emphasis she has placed on the progress of Ophelia's economic education, together with her depiction of her heroine's initially incomplete moral awareness, suggests otherwise. Ophelia has actively engaged with the customs of the world and with the operations of money as part of this, not merely to reject them and retreat to a prelapsarian economic state (to use Skinner's words) in Wales. This would be to suggest a retrograde turn to the novel's productive impetus of evolving Ophelia's self-sufficient capabilities. Nevertheless, Fielding's decision to re-invoke the rural cottage as the site of the novel's resolution continues to look ambiguous, particularly as it is here that Lord Dorchester finally rejects his false principles enabling Ophelia to withdraw her refusal to marry him, a

decision for which she feels she should be punished not rewarded. This blurring of values raises questions about how female self-sufficiency is being modelled in this work.

To address this, it is perhaps most useful to consider Fielding's handling of the novel's fictive economy as a whole. Ophelia's moral position at the end is asserted in the context of her exchange of ignorance for experience in the wider world and in terms of the agency she now possesses in making active choices. The passive role forced on her in abduction is converted to the autonomy of deciding whether or not to accept Lord Dorchester's marriage proposal. Furthermore, in situating Ophelia's aunt as an additional voice of authority here, Fielding reminds us that she, too, had her time in the world before retreating to Wales. Ophelia's experiences at the hands of a duplicitous man in some sense replicate her aunt's. Thus, when the latter challenges Lord Dorchester's offer of fortune without marriage by saying, "'You talk of Freedom and Equality, in a Situation which entirely abolishes both'" and asking, "'What can render a Woman so much your Slave, as having given up her fair Fame?'" (2.272) she, too, is drawing on her moral and economic knowledge of the world to address Lord Dorchester's principles. That these comments are made from within the novel's rural setting suggests that the model of the self-sufficient cottage economy operates as a useful resource for formulating moral and economic principles. However, it is a self-sufficiency fashioned in the world that wins out over a self-enclosed, protected – *untested* – self-sufficiency. The novel's conclusion signals how the shift from tone to substance, from abstraction and remoteness to reality, has occurred. Accordingly, Lord Dorchester's return visit to Wales sees him changed from abductor to supplicant, humbled into a 'sneaking repentant Boy' (2.273). He can no longer

sustain his earlier perception of Ophelia as ‘Treasure’ to be plundered; it is *her* sense of her value that counts now, not his.

The fictive economy of the novel explores this modelling of self-sufficiency by a further means – the use of the retrospective first person narrative. Ophelia Dorchester is telling her story from a later perspective, from a point after the related events have reached closure. (It is never clear exactly how much later.) In narrating the processes of her evolving self-sufficiency, she is thus poised between Ophelia Dorchester, the narrator and Ophelia Lenox, the narrated, between the narrating and the experiencing self. This sense of perspective emerges discreetly, so that at the same time as pledging an ‘exact Account of every Circumstance of my Life’ (1. Introduction), she positions herself through comments such as ‘Since I became better acquainted with the World’ and ‘at that Time’ (2.83). She is also self-aware in the resources and techniques by which she renders her narrative, sometimes pre-empting the course of events or digressing from the ‘Order which should be kept in a Narration’ (1.61). Elsewhere, she apologizes (in a direct address to ‘your Ladyship’) for introducing a subject ‘foreign to the History I have engaged to give you of myself’ (1.227). Fielding uses these moments of intrusion to keep the narrating self before our eyes and to sustain the perspective between this self and the experiencing self. Ophelia Dorchester’s attentiveness to the responsibilities of her role as a narrator, together with her handling of the resources available to her, can be said to replicate the refining of the self-sufficient behaviour which her narrative depicts. In other words, the narrating Ophelia structures versions of her past self to fashion a coherent whole, which can itself be said to be self-sufficient in nature.

We saw earlier, in relation to Fielding’s *David Simple* narratives, how the resources of narrative can be deployed to produce independent and individual

behaviour in narrators and narratees. We saw also how the responsibilities inherent in narrative acts can model forms of self-sufficiency relevant to understanding the concept's presence in fictional works of this period. Fielding sustains this model in *The History of Ophelia*. However, by using the first person perspective to give Ophelia complete narrative responsibility (the only one of her works in which this occurs), Fielding is locating the authorization of her moral and economic behaviour in a very precise way. This occurs because the emphasis on subjective experience produces acute psychological dimensions to the work, involving the personal and narrative economies being synthesized concurrently. The positioning of the narrating Ophelia and the self – or selves – she is narrating creates its own metaphor of self-sufficiency in the sense that she is both the producer and regulator of the resources required to provide the narrative. There is also a counter here to the mechanics of appropriation depicted in the text, most literally in the form of the abductions perpetrated by Lord Dorchester and the Marchioness of Trente, for what the narrative economy of the novel most clearly displays is that Ophelia, ultimately, is her own personal (narrative) property.

This is not to say that this final novel of Fielding's uses form to enact some utopian concept of self-sufficiency, the fictive economy's equivalent of Ophelia's Edenic cottage life. As we have seen, Fielding is consistently attentive to the ambiguities present in how self-sufficiency can be modelled. *The History of Ophelia* is alert to the tensions in depicting women as economic beings and in exploring the economic dimension of other aspects of female behaviour. In terms of form, the ending is left ambiguously poised. Ophelia notes her doubts about the wisdom of marrying Lord Dorchester, then preserves an absolute reticence on what occurs between her marriage and the point at which the narration occurs. Her doubts imply that autonomy comes at a price, whilst the gap could suggest the

perspectival ambiguities between the desirability and the feasibility of female self-sufficiency.

Fielding's works show her conviction that women had a capacity for self-sufficient behaviour based on their moral *and* economic capabilities. In this sense, the concept emerges as robust and relevant. What Fielding also shows is how modelling self-sufficiency in the context of contemporary economic systems (be they moral, social or financial) problematizes both the concept itself and the nature of female experience as it is depicted in novels of the time. Clearly, then, these models of self-sufficiency, as they have emerged in Fielding's work, provide a valuable critical tool for addressing the concept's presence in the works of other female writers of this period. It is the intention of the remaining chapters in this study to examine, by highlighting different themes and issues, how applying this conceptual tool works in practice.

Chapter Two

The Sway of the Household Gods: Domesticity in the Works of Frances Brooke

The range of Sarah Fielding's work, in terms of both theme and form, is recorded in Clara Reeve's examination of the generic evolution of the novel, *The Progress of Romance*, published in 1785.¹ Here, Fielding is praised for the 'simplicity of manners and benevolence of heart' by which she distinguishes 'her best characters'.² A little after this, several more female writers are mentioned as being deserving of recognition. These include Frances Sheridan, Sarah Scott and the subject of this present chapter, Frances Brooke. Reeve notes the cluster of works published by these writers in the early 1760s, that is in the two or three years following Fielding's *History of Ophelia*; namely the *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (1761), *Millenium Hall* (1762) and *Lady Julia Mandeville* (1763). The first two of these are discussed in Chapter Three of my study; Reeve's text notes of the third that it is a 'superior' work and that Brooke's writings as a whole 'hold a very high rank in the Novel Species'.³

However, Brooke did not confine herself to penning novels and, like Fielding, produced work in a diversity of forms across the thirty or so years of her active writing life. This included a weekly periodical, a batch of translations, two tragedies and two opera libretti. A rather shadowy figure biographically (the date of her birth is not known, though she was christened in January 1724), orphaned at thirteen, evidently well educated, she came to London in her early twenties and in due course embarked on her career as a writer.⁴ The first phase of her literary output

¹ Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance* ^{in 2 volumes} (Colchester: W. Keymer, 1785).

² Reeve, Volume 1, p. 142.

³ Reeve, Volume 2, pp. 34 and 33 respectively. Reeve erroneously cites Brooke's novel, *Emily Montague*, as being published in 1763. The correct date for that later work is 1769.

⁴ Lorraine McMullen's account of Brooke's life and works, *An Odd Attempt in a Woman: The Literary Life of Frances Brooke* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), contains

thus overlapped with Fielding's later career, although the more substantial part of her work, including the novels *Lady Julia Mandeville*, *The History of Emily Montague* (1769) and *The Excursion* (1777), was produced after Fielding (who died in 1768) had ceased to write.

There is another overlap between the two writers, however, and that is in their engagement with the nature of female economic experience. As we have seen, Fielding's exploration of the interdependence of women's moral and economic behaviour allows us to consider how the concept of self-sufficiency is being modelled in her work. At the same time, her thematic and strategic approaches demonstrate that there is more than one system in which behaviour can be designated as economic. The formation and disruption of personal economies, the operations of narrative and fictive economies, and the positioning of the individual within work and money economies amply proclaim this. Where Brooke's work is so useful is in its own placement of these ideas and themes. This yields fresh perspectives on the nature of self-sufficiency and offers new scope for examining the concept's formulations and how these are modelled. Across the range of Brooke's work, there are two main ways in which this occurs.

The first line of enquiry is a fictional one. Brooke's works are noticeable for their portrayal of lively and vivid female characters who test the conventional values that are simultaneously structured as part of her works' fictive economies. These characters occupy distinct sexual and economic categories – that of widow, spinster, working author and self-avowed coquette⁵ – and this productively organizes the means of exploring their economic experiences.

details of the available biographical information. As far as Brooke's writing career is concerned, it is fair to say that she had a shrewd eye to the literary marketplace – the money she made from her writing was an always useful contribution to her family finances – and that she readily employed the forms and modes most popular in the middle decades of the eighteenth century.

⁵ In fact the spinster occurs in a periodical. However, as she is an editorial persona created by Frances Brooke, she also operates as a fictional construct.

The second is strategic and involves the clear and unifying trend that underlies Brooke's themes, namely her sustained examination of the importance of friendship, identified and matured through courtship, as the only sure foundation of lasting happiness in the shared domestic life of marriage. Brooke's evocation of 'the sweets of dear domestic life' is double edged, however.⁶ Her version of what this means is situated within the context of contemporary constructions of what constituted both ideal domesticity and the ideal domestic woman. Thus, Brooke's work allows us to address further an anomaly identified in Sarah Fielding's works: that is, how self-sufficient behaviour is possible in women modelled by cultural ideals that preclude female autonomy.⁷ This chapter, then, is both an enquiry into the eighteenth-century's construction of domesticity and an exploration of how independently-minded women, in a range of demographic categories, manifested self-sufficient behaviour under the sway of the 'household gods'.⁸

The expression 'household gods' first appears in *Lady Julia Mandeville*. Harry Mandeville, the novel's hero, is reciprocally in love with his cousin, Lady Julia, though neither has confessed to the other the nature of their feelings. Harry's father privately discloses that they were always intended for each other and that this has influenced the question of their education. Enlarging on the principles by which

⁶ The expression first appears in *Lady Julia Mandeville*, p.64 and the identical phrase is repeated in *The History of Emily Montague*, Letter XXX. The editions used here are *Lady Julia Mandeville*, ed. E. Phillips Poole (London: The Scholartis Press, 1930) and *The History of Emily Montague*, in four volumes (London: J. Dodsley, 1784). Future references to both works will be cited in the text.

⁷ The ideology I examine in this chapter is that associated with domesticity. In Chapter Three, I extend the exploration to consider how individual behaviour is positioned in relation to ideologies of female education and conduct. Since the main fictional texts I focus on in the next chapter, Sheridan's *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* and Scott's *Millenium Hall*, were published in 1761 and 1762 respectively and thus predate the three Brooke novels to be discussed in this present chapter, it may seem that I have distorted the chronology somewhat. However, there is an inevitable amount of overlap in a study of this kind, which looks at works by a range of writers in a range of discourses. (Brooke's *Old Maid*, which is also discussed here, was published in 1755-6 and thus predates works by Fielding already discussed.) Furthermore, it seems a useful strategy to establish some demographic categories for examining the scope of autonomous female behaviour as a preliminary to the remaining stages of my thesis. Frances Brooke's work lends itself to this, as my discussion will go on to show.

⁸ In classical (Roman) history, the household gods presided over the home. The *lares* and *penates* (guardian deities) became private cults in the Roman household.

he has educated his son, he also touches on female education, recommending that women 'should never leave their household gods, the best protectors of innocence' (LJM, 186). This emphasis on confinement and protection is echoed in a later novel, *The Excursion* (1777), in which the heroine, Maria Villiers, gets into all manner of personal, moral and financial difficulties through having left the safety of her rural home to travel alone and unprotected to London. The narrator records Maria's distress in 'Why did she leave her household gods? Those household gods are alone the certain guardians of female honour'.⁹ The personalizing of those 'household gods' by use of the possessive pronoun 'her' would seem to underline the strong identification between women and home by emphasizing the effect, the implied culpability even, of Maria's self-imposed exile: not only has she turned away from her one sure place of safety, she has also endangered the cherished female virtues of honour, reputation and chastity. Yet it is worth noting that it is not only in relation to her female characters that Brooke employs the expression. In *The History of Emily Montague*, Ed. Rivers writes to his friend Captain Fitzgerald of his marital happiness and the pleasure he takes in his 'sweet home'. He declares he is 'extremely in the humor to write a poem to the household gods'. He continues, 'We neglect these amiable deities, but they are revenged; true pleasure is only to be found under their auspices' (4.145). There is a nicely-executed balance of ideas in his words: first, we have the element of worship, the praising of the deities in poetry; next we hear of their amiability, with its suggestion of sociability and humanism; but last we learn of their capacity for vengeance. Although Rivers' letter is written in a spirit of good humour, this potential for reading his words in a more ambiguous vein alerts us to seeking in Brooke's works strategies which provide an objective commentary on the construction of the sentimental domestic ideal.

⁹ *The Excursion*, p.133. All references are to *The Excursion*, edited Paula E. Backscheider and Hope D. Cotton (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997) and will hereafter be cited in the text.

In view of this, it can be no coincidence that some of Frances Brooke's most successfully drawn female characters are those who identify and question the nature of marriage and the domestic life from the woman's point of view. From the spinster Mary Singleton, who is Brooke's fictional editor of the *Old Maid*,¹⁰ to the young widow, Anne Wilmot, in *Lady Julia Mandeville*, who rejoices in her status, 'the pleasantest life in the world', because she is 'mistress of my own actions' (133), Brooke builds up a variety of voices and stances that dissent from a too complacent reading of domesticity. Indeed, Anne Wilmot goes on to record with concern what her life would be like were she to re-marry. It would be to become 'tame, domestic, inanimate' (133). In a similar vein, Arabella Fermor, the coquettish, independently-minded foil to the sentimental heroine of *The History of Emily Montague* notes her annoyance at Emily for being 'a poor tame household dove', wishing she could 'inspire her with a little of my spirit!' (2.117). Clearly these female characters are by no means ready to bow to the received notions of domesticity.

Arabella's reference to Emily Montague as 'a poor tame household dove' invites us to look more closely at the concept of the household and ask what part it might play in Frances Brooke's writings. In *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Nancy Armstrong suggests that 'the most powerful household is the one we carry around in our heads'.¹¹ It is the force of those domestic habits, clichés and expectations that constitute our cultural behaviour, not so much as a fact, but as a fiction we take to be fact. Armstrong attributes this force to a rise in the power of the domestic woman in the eighteenth century, to whom went the authority 'over the household, leisure time, courtship procedures, and kinship relations' in a process that saw the

¹⁰ *The Old Maid* by Mary Singleton, Spinster. A New Edition, revised and corrected by the Editor (London: A. Millar, 1764). Future references will be cited in the text.

¹¹ Armstrong, p.251. This observation appears in the Epilogue, in which Armstrong links eighteenth-century constructions of the household and domesticity to the continuing power of these concepts in modern culture.

feminizing of the domestic space in significantly new ways.¹² I shall be paying attention to Armstrong's arguments at later stages of this discussion, not least because of the importance she attaches to identifying the operation of distinctive economic practices that came into being by and through the domestic ideal, particularly through the writing of female subjectivity. But what her words also convey is something of the sophisticated interplay between social and economic factors that go towards establishing a concept of 'the household'.

In her book *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (1988), Lorna Weatherill writes 'Households were complex social institutions in which most people's psychological, physical, and emotional needs were met'.¹³ Her project is to examine the relationship between people's material life and their social position and, as part of this, she further defines the household as 'the unit of consumption'.¹⁴ The nature of domestic behaviour within the household thus becomes bound up not only with the close personal relationships between the members of that household, but also with patterns of consumption, involving income and expenditure, ownership of goods and modes of domestic activity and leisure pursuits. As the Introduction to *Consumption and the World of Goods* (1994), edited by John Brewer and Roy Porter, expresses it, 'The new accent in the eighteenth century upon domesticity, and the emotional intensification of the nuclear family, clearly derive in part from growing opportunities for the cherishing of household "decencies", comforts and luxuries'.¹⁵

Then, as now of course, the nature and degree of domestic consumption, indeed the nature of domestic life itself, varied from household to household.

¹² Armstrong, p.3.

¹³ Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), p.137.

¹⁴ Weatherill, p.93.

¹⁵ John Brewer and Roy Porter, editors, *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p.5.

Bridget Hill suggests that poorer, rural households, those of cottagers and labourers, continued to retain a measure of self-sufficiency, producing their own foodstuffs where possible and making their own clothes. Urban households, on the other hand, were much less self-sufficient, depending correspondingly more on shops and markets. Whether rural or urban, however, self-sufficient or dependent on bought-in goods, Hill demonstrates that it was the role of women within the household that determined the workings of the domestic economy.¹⁶ A similar conclusion, albeit on different investigative grounds, is reached by Carole Shammas in 'The Domestic Environment in Early Modern England and America'.¹⁷ Her examination of the relationship between domesticity, affect and consumption finds that 'Domesticity cannot be described solely in terms of feelings'. For homes to be converted into the 'centers of sociability' consistent with readings of eighteenth-century domestic values 'a shift in female work patterns' was required.¹⁸ It is to this relationship between the household and the domestic woman that I now wish to turn.

Although the identification of women with the domestic environment was not new in the eighteenth century, the ideology of domestic femininity was.¹⁹ Under Jürgen Habermas's model of separate spheres, it is possible to talk of the domestic realm in terms of what was feminine and private, its atmospheres and values culturally specified and valorized. Distinct from this was the masculine sphere of

¹⁶ Bridget Hill, *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989). I use Hill's work more extensively in Chapter Four of my study, where I examine the nature of women's work, including the forms of labour they contributed to the household economy. At this stage, my interest is in elucidating the concept of the household itself.

¹⁷ Carol Shammas, 'The Domestic Environment in Early Modern England and America' in the *Journal of Social History*, 14, Autumn 1980, pp.3-24. Her article examines probate inventories in order to investigate what is implicated in 'domesticity'.

¹⁸ Shammas, p.17.

¹⁹ Kathryn Shevelow provides a useful summary of the construction of domestic femininity in *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989). See particularly pp.10-17 and the 'Afterword' pp.191-198. The summary remains valid although the context of Shevelow's discussion relates primarily to the periodical.

public and economic life.²⁰ Habermas does not pay much attention to the domestic sphere in itself, but it is part of Nancy Armstrong's argument to show how the domestic ideal as represented by woman – and the specific qualities that made her desirable – operated as the focus of shared identification between competing interest groups in the economic and political world. The discourses of this domestic ideology, she notes, were the conduct book and the novel. Following a different emphasis, but one which requires the model of separate spheres to suggest ways of reading the historical and ideological refiguring of domesticity, James Thompson in *Models of Value* (1996) sees the relationship between the spheres in terms of the relationship between the discourses they produced. Both the discourse of domesticity and the discourse of political economy, Thompson argues, were working through a crisis in the concept of value.²¹

The particular values identified with the domestic woman – and it should be noted we are talking here of women of the middle- and upper-middle ranks – uniquely fitted her for her 'work' within the private realm. The moral and affective emphasis of these values distinguished her role from that of men in public life and also came to mark the form of the authority she held within the home. With its accent on sociability, tasteful consumption and emotional exchange, the woman's control of the domestic space designated a recognition of gender differences which re-inscribed conceptions of value as part of a domestic ideology. This is often read as a typically patriarchal ruse. Authority the woman may have, but it is

²⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962), trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press 1989). I have cited Habermas as the most often noted proponent of the concept of separate spheres and have referred to his model as a useful way of incorporating the distinctions it identifies. It is not my present purpose to suggest a corrective to this model, though it is to be noted that other commentators have found it unsatisfactory.

²¹ Thompson, pp.2-3. He argues that the transformation of money from treasure to capital (and its figuration in the transformation from specie to paper) in the early modern period represented the crisis of 'where is value or worth to be located' (2). He continues, 'The two new literary forms or discourses that preeminently handle or manage this crisis – political economy and the novel – are at the same time produced by this crisis and are inseparable from it' (3).

circumscribed in its range of influence and, in confining its sway to the private, the woman remains cut off from any sort of integration into economical and political life. The discourses of domesticity can thus be read as forms of surveillance or as sites (specifically the novel) from which attacks on the strictures of domesticity can be mounted. Armstrong's thesis stands out as clearly distinctive here, for she reads domesticity as a form of power and argues that, far from feeding off crumbs dropped from the patriarchal table, women actively managed this power to produce new cultural formations of the individual.²²

Domesticity, then, embraces a nexus of ideas and constructs. If the household stands as a nuclear institution in which particularized forms of social and economic behaviour are practised, then domesticity is the cultural organization of those practices. Carole Shammas' definition of domesticity becomes an important contribution at this point, for in describing it as 'making home the center for most non-market social interaction', she identifies an important distinction between public and private forms of activity.²³ Similarly Sandra Burman points out how the ideology of domesticity stresses 'the non-commercial nature of the home'.²⁴ In his dialectical reading of the discourses of political economy and domesticity, Thompson sees this distinction operate in terms of dynamics of capitalist exchange and those of emotional exchange. Thus it was part of the domestic ideology expressed through the novel that the home was free from the taint of the market, with its exchange mechanisms and money transactions. The courtship novel, for example, worked this through by means of plot; the difficulties and sufferings of the female removed from the home would be followed by her restoration to domestic safety through marriage and under the protection of a husband. For Thompson, this

²² See the introduction to *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, pp.3-27.

²³ Shammas, 'The Domestic Environment in Early Modern England and America', p.3.

²⁴ Sandra Burman, editor, *Fit Work for Women* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, London: Croom Helm, 1979), p.11.

plot and its variations offer a way of reading the connections in the structural transformations of the public and private spheres. This is not possible in a straightforward way because the boundaries that separate these spaces, being ideological, are 'largely invisible'; instead it works by revealing 'moments or places of transgression'. Such a disruption would occur through 'the presence of financial exchange in the discourse of domesticity which constitutes the novel'.²⁵ In the novel, Thompson argues, the emphasis falls on 'having and spending, but not getting'.²⁶ Nevertheless, critics of eighteenth-century female novelists have long recognized money as an important area of interest in works of this period. Mona Scheuermann sums up the more exuberant aspects of the debate in the opening to her 1987 article 'Women and Money in Eighteenth-Century Fiction':

Courtship and marriage, decorum and social graces, virginity and reputation have long been recognized as among the most central concerns of eighteenth-century novels that focus on women. I wish to suggest that money is as important a concern to the woman in an eighteenth-century novel as any of these others.²⁷

Extending her argument in *Her Bread to Earn* (1993), Scheuermann discusses a number of representations of women by both male and female writers, arguing that these women are every bit as interested in money as men and concluding that their capability in handling complex financial matters extends beyond the successful management of the domestic budget.²⁸

The identification of women as economic beings and acknowledgement of the broader scope of their financial capacity are important developments. However, Scheuermann's argument is insufficiently problematized and she overlooks the

²⁵ Thompson, p.24.

²⁶ Thompson, p.146. As will become apparent in the course of my own argument, I regard the dialectical nature of Thompson's readings of the novel he discusses too absolute.

²⁷ Mona Scheuermann, 'Women and Money in Eighteenth-Century Fiction', *Studies in the Novel*, Volume 19, Number 3, Autumn 1987, pp.311-322. This reference, p.311.

²⁸ Mona Scheuermann, *Her Bread to Earn*. Her largely thematic discussion concludes that 'the money scenes, connections, and analyses [...] are not accidental or peripheral but represent a major theme of the novelists as they depict female characters', p.243.

discursive complications for the novel in its writing of money. For example, it is difficult to talk of money in the eighteenth-century novel without recognizing the theme of economic victimization in female narrative. For every instance of female monetary independence and economic empowerment, there are many others which depict heroines in distress and reveal writers manifesting their anxieties over how the theme of money is to be handled, not least because of an ideological framework that limited their terms of reference. As we have seen, Sarah Fielding negotiated some of these difficulties in novels including *David Simple* and *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn* (Camilla's story in the former and Mrs Bilson's in the latter are particularly germane). Like her, Frances Brooke uses her works to negotiate such anxieties and limitations in order to show how woman as an economic figure can be depicted as part of the domestic novel. Since this involves developing a version of female behaviour that remains viable within the strictures it would seem to disrupt, we can expect the concept of self-sufficiency to be implicated in Brooke's handling of this rewritten domestic figure.

Before coming directly to a discussion of Brooke's work, a brief examination of some of the terms of reference arising above is required. To a large extent this centres on a consideration of the concept of value.²⁹ The moral authority given to women as they became increasingly identified with the home turned much upon the qualities by which they were to be valued – qualities of body and mind on the one hand; of efficiencies in domestic and social practices on the other. The moral endowment of this usage of value found expression in the novel, including in

²⁹ The processes by which value figured linguistically in separate discourses is discussed in Kurt Heinzelman, *The Economics of the Imagination*. See pp.14-15 for a concise overview of some of the implications. See also James Thompson, *Models of Value* and Barbara Herrnstein Smith *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1991). The latter's focus is primarily on literary value. A clear and useful summary of 'value's meanings and usages is available in Marilyn Waring, *If Women Counted: A New Feminist Economics* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp 21-25. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1976) also provides a useful source.

the didactic elements by which the form claimed its legitimacy. It could implicitly follow from this that the novel would reveal an ideological impetus for protecting this conceptualizing of value from any consideration in economic terms. Certainly a tendency to sentimentalize the dynamics of value – the ‘delicacy’ that insisted a woman’s value should be innate not acquired, her body beautiful by nature not art, her mind inherently virtuous, receptive only to the appropriate forms of education – is there. However, as Barbara Herrnstein Smith notes in her work on critical theory, *Contingencies of Value* (1991), value is ‘neither a fixed attribute, an inherent quality, or an objective property of things but, rather, an effect of multiple, continuously changing, and continuously interacting variables’. In other words, it is ‘the product of the dynamics of a system’.³⁰ This being so, the discursive separation of concepts of value – exchange value, use value, intrinsic value – into economic and noneconomic systems becomes problematic. The novel’s cultural work in constructing an ideal of femininity and a domestic space for it to inhabit establishes a standard of value which is inscribed with moral power. Yet this cannot help but figure the presence of a marketplace, in which relational and transactional procedures occur, regardless of whether that presence is considered to be metaphorical or literal. Furthermore, since part of what was valued in the ideal domestic woman was her ability to manage the household and control family expenditure, the economic and noneconomic usages of value become more interdependent, less distinct.

We also have to consider here the term ‘economy’. In writing of how value is produced as part of the dynamics of a system, Barbara Herrnstein Smith indicates this to be ‘specifically an *economic* system’.³¹ She cites two economies in particular: the market economy and the personal economy. This is to say, it is

³⁰ Herrnstein Smith, p.30.

³¹ Herrnstein Smith, p.30.

possible – and widely-practised – to talk of a range of different economies, with the sense that we have particular structures in mind. Kurt Heinzelman's discussion of 'economy' in *The Economics of the Imagination* (1980) identifies its derivation from the Greek *oikonomia* meaning the management or regulation of a household and goes on to consider how the English usage suggesting 'both frugality and efficiency' has been extended to apply 'to the management of many structures, political and domestic, commercial and aesthetic'. From this, 'In its largest sense, the word asserts our capacity for creating intellectual structures and for imaginatively regulating them'.³² My discussion of Frances Brooke's works takes note of the flexibility of the term 'economy' – 'this notoriously flexible metaphor', as Heinzelman expresses it –³³ to suggest ways in which we can explore figurings of women and the structural spheres they inhabit, whether moral, domestic, monetary, personal, or literary.³⁴ The imaginative space of the novel finds a counterpart in the imaginative regulation of these structures, a connection noted in Armstrong's suggestion that the most powerful household in domestic ideology is the one we carry in our heads, quoted earlier, and also noted in Davidoff and Hall's observation that 'home' in the early modern period was 'as much a social construct and state of mind as a reality of bricks and mortar'.³⁵

It is also in this connection, I will argue, that we can read for formulations of self-sufficiency, for the resources on which the feminized domestic sphere drew can be expressed in imaginative ways as independently functioning economies that posit their own sufficiencies. Furthermore, the regulation of these resources reveals

³² Heinzelman, Preface p.ix.

³³ Heinzelman, Preface, p.x.

³⁴ I have already shown in the previous chapter how behaviours within these alternative structures can be designated as economic. There are also, as discussed there, the narrative and the fictive economies, which structure technical and imaginative spaces that are, in turn, regulated in particular ways.

³⁵ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), p.358. In addition, Thompson refers to home as 'the purest of ideological constructs', *Models of Value*, p.158.

not only how such economies work in a structural sense, but also how they operate imaginatively. This occurs where metaphors of economy and value allow us to consider the sufficiencies of non-monetary economies, for example the moral or personal, whilst the monetary is at the same time metaphorically present. I show how Frances Brooke was aware of the possibilities of this linguistic and conceptual phenomenon as a literary strategy and that her works offer opportunities for examining how an argument for female economic self-sufficiency can be conducted in a discourse, the domestic novel, that ideologically distrusts monetary expression.

The emphasis in the rest of this chapter accordingly falls on the texts themselves. Four in particular will be discussed: the periodical *The Old Maid* (published 1755-6) and the novels *Lady Julia Mandeville* (1763), *The History of Emily Montague* (1769) and *The Excursion* (1777). Each text questions the normative values of the domestic ideal by creating the dynamics of a separate value system. These alternative systems are, in their turn, associated with particular forms of female behaviour, sexually and economically designated by the spinster, the widow, the coquette and the working writer respectively. It is upon this basis that a critical evaluation of the relationship between female self-sufficiency and the ideological structures of domesticity and domestic femininity can be implemented.

***The Old Maid*: 'In defiance of all criticisms I will write'**

The question of value is one that arises immediately in *The Old Maid*, the periodical that was Frances Brooke's first literary venture and which she published weekly between November 1755 and July 1756. A far-ranging breadth of subject matter – from the theatre and masquerade to courtship, from the Lisbon earthquake to the Foundling Hospital – is shaped and managed by the editorial persona, Mary

Singleton. The editor's name and the title of the magazine unite to place a particular emphasis on Mary Singleton's spinster status in a process that looks affirmatory.

Yet the editor herself, it appears, undermines such a reading, for she writes 'an old maid is, in my opinion, except an old bachelor, the most useless and insignificant of all God's creatures' (2). Denied the domestic ideal of marriage and motherhood, Mary Singleton associates herself with what Sheila Jeffreys shows in *The Spinster and Her Enemies* (1985) was to be the lot of the nineteenth-century spinster, namely to experience 'the total contempt for women who failed to perform their life's work of servicing men'.³⁶ Finding herself 'so unhappy as to be one of those very worthless animals', Mary feels it incumbent on her to seek out 'some way or other to be of service to the community'. *The Old Maid* offers her just such an opportunity and she declares her hope that 'by giving to the public the observations my unemploy'd course of life has enabled me to make, to obtain pardon for leading my days in a way so entirely unserviceable to society' (2).³⁷

The very first issue of *The Old Maid* thus becomes a site of masked voices and different value constructions. The 'worthless', 'unemploy'd' and 'unserviceable' spinster nevertheless steps before the public in a remarkably assertive way and avers 'in defiance of all criticisms I will write' (2). Brooke's ironic screening of her own authorial voice, a commonplace device in periodicals of the time, allows her to play in imaginative ways with the question of value. This is a strategy that becomes inscribed in the figure of the spinster herself. The careful inclusion of Mary Singleton's history is part of this, for in it she explains how her

³⁶ Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality 1880-1930* (London and Boston: Pandora Press, 1985), p.87.

³⁷ Arthur Murphy's play *The Old Maid*, published in 1761, treats the eponymous spinster Miss Harlow, as an object of scorn. Her efforts to secure a husband half her age expose her to ridicule and lead to her rejection by a more appropriate suitor, who tells her, 'you may go, and bewail your virginity in the mountains' (Act 2). There is an additional problem for Miss Harlow's much younger sister-in-law, who finds her temper 'sour' (Act 1). The play's comedy turns on the presentation of the spinster as a negative sexual and economic category. She disrupts the ideology of the desirable domestic woman and has a dependent position in the Harlow household.

spinsterhood is due to the venality of the man she was to marry, who abandoned her for a richer wife. That this is offered as explanation rather than justification is suggestive as is the revelation (still in the first issue) that Mary Singleton has been responsible for bringing up and educating her niece, Julia. It is suggestive because we begin to see how Brooke is obfuscating any straightforward acceptance of the spinster's value (or lack of it). In an article on *The Old Maid*, W.H. New has suggested that 'By declaring spinsterhood', Brooke 'seemed to be declaring a deliberate intent to use and not to be bound by the marital categories that society devised for women'.³⁸ I would go further and suggest that the figure of the spinster allowed Brooke to explore ways in which value categories associated with women's productive and reproductive roles within marriage and domestic life could be transformed. Mary Singleton may have missed her opportunity to be valued as an effective manager of a conjugal household, but she can demonstrate her management skills as the editor of a magazine. She may not have 'had the honor of being a mother' (7), but she asserts a form of productivity, which itself takes on a reproductive formulation through the periodical's characteristic proliferation of ideas and materials that can build one issue from the seeds planted in a previous one. (It is a nice metaphor that, in running from mid-November to late July, *The Old Maid*'s productive span was nine months.) The negative valuations of the spinster are thus re-figured by Brooke to accommodate a more subtle reading of her social and domestic significance. At the same time, Brooke could use the spinster's alienation from the feminine ideal of conjugal domesticity to mirror woman's exclusion from participation in economic and political life.

How the model of domestic femininity was represented in periodicals of the eighteenth century is discussed in Kathryn Shevelow's *Women and Print Culture*

³⁸ W.H. New, 'The Old Maid: Frances Brooke's Apprentice Feminism', the *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, Number 2, Summer 1973, pp.9-12. This reference, p.9.

(1989). She identifies the early periodical as ‘one of the principal linguistic sites for the production of a new ideology of femininity and the family’.³⁹ One figure in particular was dominant, the domestic woman, ‘a highly idealized construction of femininity’ and ‘formulated in such a way as to involve the woman both as reader and as writer, as subject as well as object’.⁴⁰ Her presence in the early periodicals edited by men worked by processes that identified women as a specific interest group or as a ‘sub-audience’ of a generally male readership.⁴¹ The co-authors of *Women’s Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and the Woman’s Magazine* (1991) further contend that the emergence of the magazine as a form and this identification went together, for, from the start, ‘the magazine’s publishers and authors felt obliged to attract the attention of female readers by invoking their interests as discrete and important’.⁴²

A brief survey of some of the early periodicals suggests how this worked in practice. For example, the *Athenian Mercury* (published 1691-97) dealt with topics and issues of interest to women and regularly included correspondence from female readers. This is seen by Shevelov in terms of women gaining a significant means of self-representation, ‘asserting the legitimacy of the expression of feminine experience in writing’.⁴³ This was a practice continued in the *Tatler* (1709) and the *Spectator* (1711-13) (although the correspondence was not necessarily authentic). The *Tatler* also constructed a counterpart to its editor Isaac Bickerstaff in the form of his half-sister, Jenny Distaff. This presented female readers with a figure who embodied the domestic values associated with home and family. It is interesting, however, that Jenny needs domesticating, for this provides the *Tatler* with an

³⁹ Kathryn Shevelov *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p.3.

⁴⁰ Shevelov, p.5.

⁴¹ Shevelov, p.149.

⁴² Ros Ballaster, Margaret Beetham, Elizabeth Frazer and Sandra Hebron, *Women’s Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and the Woman’s Magazine* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p.48.

⁴³ Shevelov, p.91.

opportunity to address women in an educative way. We can also see here the work of the periodical in constructing the ideal woman as ‘first and foremost a wife and mother possessing feminine qualities naturally suited to the household’.⁴⁴

This formulation of a particular set of values emerges, too, in those periodicals that were edited by men, but addressed to a generally female readership. *The Ladies’ Mercury* (1693), possibly from the same stable as the *Athenian Mercury*, has been identified by Bertha Monica Stearns as the first English periodical for women, though she describes its contents as ‘unedifying’.⁴⁵ A number of other periodicals were to follow, including the *Ladies’ Diary* (1704), which resolved to reflect ‘what all women ought to be – innocent, modest, instructive and agreeable’,⁴⁶ *The Free-Thinker* (1718-19) and *The Visiter* [sic] (1723). The improvement of women was a recurrent theme; to give their minds ‘as beautiful a turn as nature has bestowed upon their persons’ is the avowed intention of *The Free-Thinker*’s editor. This is echoed in *The Visiter*, which concentrates on those subjects ‘which tend to the improvement of the Mind and Manners as they are relative to a Domestic Life’.⁴⁷ This editor regards ‘household economy a very great perfection in a woman and what every one of them ought to be mistress of’, yet he also promotes the development of women’s mental powers in order to fit them as more rewarding companions to their husbands.⁴⁸

By the time *The Old Maid* appeared in 1755, the idea of the periodical for women was therefore well-established. Not only this, but a settled tradition of female editorial personae had expanded to incorporate real women as editors and

⁴⁴ Shevelow, p.117.

⁴⁵ Bertha Monica Stearns, ‘Early English Periodicals for Ladies (1700-1760)’ in *PMLA*, Number 48, 1933, pp.38-60. This reference, p.38.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Cynthia L. White, *Women’s Magazines 1693-1968* (London: Michael Joseph, 1970), p.25.

⁴⁷ Both quoted in Cynthia White, *Women’s Magazine 1693-1968*, p.26.

⁴⁸ August 6, 1723. Quoted by Bertha Monica Stearns in ‘Early English Periodicals for Ladies (1700-1760)’, p.47.

authors of magazines. Because of the masking and mystifying processes involved in the creating of these personae, it is not always easy to identify the writers behind them. In the case of women's periodicals, the *Female Tatler* (1709-11) may or may not have been written by a woman (or women), while the fictitious editor of *The Parrot* (1728), Mrs Penelope Prattle, may or may not have been a persona adopted by Eliza Haywood.⁴⁹ However, despite such confusions, there is no doubt that Eliza Haywood was the author of the *Female Spectator* (1744-46), 'usually considered the first periodical for women written by a woman';⁵⁰ and one of the most important of *The Old Maid's* forerunners. *The Female Spectator's* emphasis on courtship and marriage indicated a moral stance that worked to endorse the domestic ideal.⁵¹ The co-authors of *Women's Worlds* see it as offering 'an example of the new "domestic" magazine that came to dominate women's periodical literature from the mid eighteenth century onward' and show how this represents an important shift to the definition of the readers of ladies' magazines 'in terms of domestic enclosure'.⁵²

Shevelow identifies another important shift: the traditional representation of women's concerns as a separate subject area within the periodical was for the first time in the *Female Spectator* built upon the editor's own representation of herself as feminine. Amongst other things, this had a direct impact on the reader-writer relationship basing it upon a 'shared femininity' in a non-hierarchical construction.⁵³ The distinctive nature of this reader-writer relationship acquires a particular resonance when the internal relational organization of the *Female Spectator* is considered, for in creating a fictitious group of female contributors (in the form of a wife, a widow and a daughter) and in placing a thematic emphasis on

⁴⁹ For a discussion of possible identifications of the editors of these periodicals see Ros Ballaster et al, *Women's Worlds*, pp.55-6 for the *Female Tatler* and Bertha Monica Stearns 'Early English Periodicals for Ladies (1700-1760)' for *The Parrot*, which is now generally agreed to be by Haywood.

⁵⁰ Shevelow, p.167.

⁵¹ For commentaries on the *Female Spectator* see Shevelow, pp.167-74 and Ballaster et al, pp.56-61.

⁵² Ballaster et al, p.59 and p.61.

⁵³ Shevelow, pp.167-169.

courtship, marriage and domesticity, Haywood is consistently representing women in terms of marital status and their relationship to men. The suggestion that only the *Female Spectator* herself is 'defined autonomously without reference to a man, husband or father' is in part belied by her references to Addison's Mr Spectator as 'my learned brother of ever precious memory', even if she is thinking of him in terms of the literary fraternity of fellow writers.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the claims in *Women's Worlds* that the *Female Spectator* broke ground in establishing a medium of exchange for women, 'in creating an atmosphere of intimacy' and 'an artificial imaginary community in which its readers could participate from the isolation of their homes' are persuasive.⁵⁵ There is also an implication here that women's identification with the domestic ideal as propounded in the *Female Spectator* enabled imaginative processes of mediation between 'the isolation of their homes', where home is the locus of domestic life, and a 'community', where that community is not only made up of other women, but is also conceivable as a space where shared ideals could be imaginatively regulated. The fact that this community, insofar as it is a construct within the *Female Spectator*, is both 'artificial' and 'imaginary' is significant, for it provides specific ways of considering how such processes of regulation operated; ways which, in the case of *The Old Maid*, the figure of the spinster can help illuminate since she herself might appear artificial and imaginary in terms of the feminine community of ideals and male-female relationships from which she is excluded.

Frances Brooke's biographer, Lorraine McMullen, considers it likely that Brooke would have known and read the *Female Spectator*, although there is no direct evidence for this.⁵⁶ If so, the decision to use the spinster as title and editor

⁵⁴ Ballaster et al, p.57; and quoted in Shevelow, p.168 respectively.

⁵⁵ Ballaster et al, p.60.

⁵⁶ McMullen, Chapter 3, pp.13-31 covers *The Old Maid*. The relationship between *The Old Maid* and the *Female Spectator* is considered pp.13-15.

could be seen as a strategic attempt to re-define the marital categories Haywood employed in her magazine. More immediately, if the two works are to be connected, there is an interesting modal link in each editor's representation of her authority to address her audience. Haywood's editor is authorized in terms of her reformation from earlier vanities and departures from appropriate conduct to a current moral probity, based on experience and reflection. Brooke's Mary Singleton, as we have seen, cites experience too, and also bases her present claims on previous remissness, in her case in living 'unservicably'. Yet, whilst the Female Spectator is authorized in relation to sexual conduct, the emphasis in Mary Singleton's case falls on her exclusion from sexual activity (which she represents linguistically in economic terms). Brooke, in fact, constructs an entertainingly elaborate web of artifice around the body of the spinster. Tuula Gordon notes that the ways in which unmarried women have been represented 'form a 'fiction'',⁵⁷ arising in part from their eluding that definition in relation to men which helps to 'factualize' a woman as someone's wife, mother, grandmother, widow or daughter. The effect of this, Gordon observes, is the construction of an 'old maid stereotype' that emerges in 'a perception of single women as lacking something, being incomplete, deviating from the norm and the normal'.⁵⁸ In considering how the spinster editor of *The Old Maid* is created and functions as part of a text, simultaneous consideration can be given to how this figure negotiates such value perceptions, providing a site where sufficiencies associated with female sexual and economic categories can be imaginatively structured and mediated.

The subject matter of *The Old Maid* is characterized by its diversity: 'a haphazard affair editorially' is how Brian Braithwaite puts it in *Women's*

⁵⁷ Tuula Gordon, *Single Women: On the Margins?* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1994), p.17.

⁵⁸ Gordon, p.129.

Magazines: The First 300 Years (1995).⁵⁹ Cynthia White finds the editor ‘wrote on whatever topic happened to take her fancy [...] with no attempt at planning or continuity’.⁶⁰ Mary Singleton herself makes no attempt to disguise this ‘Caprice’ (11) or to apologize for offering ‘a ragout’ of topics (118); in fact she asserts it as a positive strategy both for expressing her aim to ‘write chiefly for the amusement of my own sex’ (12) and for identifying her own character and stance as ‘too much a freeborn Briton to submit to any thing like rule’ (11). The theme of liberty, indeed, is one that runs throughout *The Old Maid*, expressed in both personal and political formulations. ‘Correspondents’ write in to invite the Old Maid’s comments on issues of public moment, including the earthquake at Lisbon (No.5), the distress of the clergy (No.25) and the question of a national religion (No.32). One ‘correspondent’, dubbed the AntiGallican, sustains through a number of issues a commentary on the war between England and France, noted by Mrs Singleton, in Number 20, as a topic on which ‘the conversation of this town at present turns’ (164).⁶¹ The editor herself writes frequently on the subject of the Russian state, classical literature and the nature of the liberty they present.⁶² Education (No. 11) and charitable institutions (No. 13) are examined, inasmuch as they are social structures affecting the lives of the individual; and marriage is a theme considered throughout.

Mary Singleton’s comment that ‘I am a woman, and politics are not my province’ (103) therefore strikes the reader as disingenuous. And that of course is

⁵⁹ Brian Braithwaite, *Women’s Magazines: The First 300 Years* (London: Peter Owen, 1995), p.11.

⁶⁰ White, p.30.

⁶¹ Most commentators, including White and Shevelow, assume Brooke as the sole author of *The Old Maid*. New identifies the ‘correspondence’ as ‘sheer artifice’, since Brooke ‘wrote the whole thing’ (New, p.9). However, although the ‘artifice’ of the ‘correspondence’ stands, McMullen discusses the identities of several other contributors to the periodical in her biography of Brooke, pp.25-28.

⁶² This was a theme Brooke examined in her plays, *Virginia* (1756) and *The Siege of Sinope* (1781). In the first, Virginia is identified as ‘a Roman Maid/Who loves her Honour and her Liberty’ (Act I, Scene I). She becomes a rallying cry for the Romans: ‘Liberty! Virginia!’ (I v). In Act III.vi, a clear connection is made between Liberty and the domestic virtues in ‘I see the Goddess Liberty, attended’ By all her Train of Joys! Domestic Peace,/Connubial Love, and every home felt Bliss’. See Frances Brooke, *Virginia, A Tragedy, with Odes, Pastorals and Translations* (London: A. Millar, 1756).

the point. Brooke has made the fullest strategic use of the editorial persona. There are tonal and positional shifts, embracing satire, irony and sheer playfulness, with a particularly deft use of the apposite aside, signalled right from the start when the statement that an old maid is the most useless of God's creatures is qualified with the wry comment 'except an old bachelor' (2). The editor's disclaimer has to be read in this context. In her averral of her sex, she simultaneously implies a distinct feminine sphere of interest in the reiteration of the political sphere as masculine; yet we cannot escape the fact that, wherever the editor asserts her femininity, wherever she claims to authorize herself as a woman, her status as a spinster is unavoidably implicated. Furthermore, through the very disingenuousness of her disclaimer, the spinster editor risks implying her own sexual abnormality since she has made a quite evident entry into the 'masculine' through her participation in political topics.

Tuula Gordon has written of how some women feared 'the harmful effects of spinsterhood', that it might mean 'developing abnormal masculine qualities'.⁶³ She also refers to nineteenth-century categorizations of single women as, for example, 'hermaphrodites' or 'mannish maidens'.⁶⁴ Brooke does not avoid the presence of these perceived deviations from sexual norms. They emerge both subtly, as in the case of the gentleman correspondent who refers to himself as '*an Old Maid of the masculine gender*' (41) and, more explicitly, in the letter from a young lady in Number 24. This correspondent's 'masculine' appetite for learning and knowledge has caused an unusual 'misfortune': a desire to experience what it is like to shave has stimulated the growth of bristles. This mystifying of gender finds a counterpart in the young lady's urge 'to be truly informed whether or not you are a real Old Maid?' She tells Mary Singleton, 'I cannot rest till I know who you are' (208). Questions of sexual and personal identity are conflated here, both in

⁶³ Gordon, p. 10.

⁶⁴ Gordon, p. 3. She is quoting from Lee Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband: Single Women in America: the Generations of 1780-1840* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 1984)

the body of the young lady and in the fictive construct of the Old Maid. Throughout *The Old Maid*, Brooke deploys techniques of characterization that allow her to build this tension between Mary Singleton as a fiction and the spinster as a real economic and sexual category. Addressing those aspects that stereotype spinsters enables her to sustain an artifice whereby discontinuities between gender categories can be represented. This provides an imaginative site where sexual values can be tested and re-organized in meaningful ways. Nowhere does this emerge more clearly than in *The Old Maid*'s thematic exploration of the domestic ideal.

As we have already seen, Mary Singleton's own experience of courtship was truncated by the defection of her suitor before the courtship could be ratified in marriage and expressed in the domestic life. By showing how an unexpected legacy and chance of a wealthy alliance proved too attractive for him when compared with the Old Maid's modest inheritance, Brooke creates a critical stance towards marriages that draw their values from the marketplace. This theme is examined by means of the editor's niece, Julia, and her courtship with Mr Bellville.⁶⁵ Julia is established as the ideal of all that is desirable in the marriageable woman. 'Her mind is the seat of every grace and virtue', she is 'beneficent', reserved, has a taste for polite literature and, above all, she possesses one of the prime feminine requisites for domestic life, being 'a remarkable good oeconomist' (9-10). The responsibility for Julia's education has been the Old Maid's, a role which she construes as maternal and which she hopes she has 'executed [...] in such a manner as to make some worthy man happy in a wife' (7). This looks at first like a passive acquiescence in a pervasive ideology of what constitutes value in a woman, particularly when we consider that Mary Singleton has transformed her 'lack of

⁶⁵ Berland notes it as 'a kind of model courtship'. K.J.H. Berland, 'A Tax on Old Maids and Bachelors: Frances Brooke's *Old Maid*' in Frederick M. Keener and Susan E. Lorsch, editors, *Eighteenth-Century Women and the Arts* (New York and London: Greenwood Press 1988), pp.29-35. This reference p.33.

value' as a spinster into the cultural values of desirability in her niece. However, this requires closer scrutiny.

The identification of Julia's value as 'a remarkable good oeconomist' finds its expression in monetary terms certainly (the quotation commences 'as to her own expences') and implies an inherent ability to manage a household, but there is an additional, metaphorical presence behind the term. The qualities Julia possesses are themselves regulated through a personal economy that can be designated as self-sufficient in its very individuality. As her aunt puts it, Julia's ideas about marriage are 'very different from the generality of the world' (45). This refers to her refusal to allow market factors to dictate courtship and marriage. The emphasis instead falls on personal factors, most importantly on friendship and equality. By this, not only is the monetary designation of value refigured, but so too are those values represented as feminine within domestic ideology, which, although ostensibly non-monetary, nevertheless mark a woman's 'price' in the marketplace of desirable wives.

Brooke, through her editorial persona, addresses the idea of friendship and quality in marriage in a sustained way, writing, 'Our sex, in the affair of love, the most important of female life [...] is by no means upon an equal footing with the other'. She observes that marriage made unequal by rank or fortune 'seldom turns out happy' (53). The damage commences when children are educated according to gender, 'only because the blockheadly son is to continue the letter A to the nineteenth century' and the 'modest, agreeable, and beautiful daughter, is obliged to change it for some other letter in the Alphabet!' (81). By contrast, her conception of the ideal is expressed most appositely when she writes, 'Equality is necessary to friendship; and without friendship marriage must be at the best insipid, but oftener a state of perfect misery' (53). Working through this is the theme of personal liberty,

which Brooke portrays as an individual sufficiency, establishing its own value system both within a personal economy and a wider conception of political liberty. Julia's courtship negotiates these inward and outward structures by demonstrating how her personal and intellectual attributes are to find development within the conjugal relationship. Bellville's own advocacy of personal and political liberty asserts a potential for equality in domestic life that transforms sexual and economic roles represented in prevailing domestic ideology.

If the nature of the household's interactions are identified as non-market and non-commercial, as Shamma and Weatherill have stated, then Brooke's representation of the domestic relationship shows how notions of sexual exchange can also be reconfigured. Based on friendship and personal liberty, Brooke's idea of marriage avoids the either-or of sexual and economic division (masculine-feminine, political-non-political, economic-noneconomic) and suggests a neither-both configuration, a kind of third way that values people first and foremost as individuals. Once again, it is the figure of the spinster, the 'third sex',⁶⁶ that mediates this, for there is a gender continuity in the Old Maid's educative and 'maternal' relationship with her niece; but a discontinuity in their respective inclusion in, and exclusion from, married domestic life. However, in posing this once more in terms of the spinster's artificial role as a fictive (and cultural) construct, and her real presence as a distinct economic and sexual figure, Brooke plays with the imaginative structures by which individual behaviour is regulated. The dream allegory Brooke includes in *The Old Maid* illustrates the point, for it both depicts such an imaginative site and also enacts reinterpretation of how the spinster is to be valued.

⁶⁶ Gordon, p.3. The term, as Gordon points out, was originally associated with the idea of the Amazon or Amazonian woman.

The Old Maid's dream, recorded in detail in Number 21, centres on the choice between Marriage and Celibacy, to whose temples Mary Singleton is conducted by Prudence. She finds Marriage attended by Cupid and Plutus (the God of Riches) and surrounded by Love, Honour, Respect, Wealth and Posterity. However, just as she is about to choose Marriage as her preferred way of life, the Old Maid notices the presence of Care, Discord and Jealousy and, most graphically, Slavery – the antithesis of the liberty she elsewhere advocates – bearing 'a yoke and loaded with chains [...] which he [...] invited me to put on' (179). Although Prudence assures her that these are 'not the constant, but accidental attendants on Marriage' (179), the Old Maid rescinds the choice she is about to make and is conducted next to Celibacy. This appears at first to be a (literally) sterile option. Celibacy is approached through a grove of evergreens 'which cast a gloomy and melancholy shade' (179), creating an atmosphere that is silent and solitary. Celibacy is 'severe, her complexion pale and unanimated' and she holds 'a branch of barren yew' in her hand (180). But, closer to, the Old Maid is struck by her serenity; there is no care or discord here. The Old Maid is about to make Celibacy her choice when, once more, a new possibility is introduced; a third option (again echoing the notion of a 'third sex') appears in the form of Liberty. This, rather than Marriage or Celibacy, is the Old Maid's unhesitating final choice. She goes with Liberty.

The Old Maid does not seek to interpret her dream. It is left to stand autonomously. The extent to which it reflects issues and concerns expressed throughout the periodical is, however, self-evident. Self-evident too is how the dream form provides an imaginative scope. Brooke uses this factor to forge the elaborate conceit of an imaginary editorial persona, from whose unconscious the dream originates, but who does not comment on it, and a 'correspondent' who, in

Number 23, writes in to record the response the dream has produced in her. These two presences between whom the dream is positioned are significantly both spinsters. A continuity is accordingly established so that when the correspondent describes herself as an old maid ‘growing daily more in love with that liberty and independency I had made my choice’ (192), an immediate call is made to reconsider Mary Singleton’s earlier valuing of herself as ‘worthless’, ‘useless and insignificant’. Furthermore, by mediating this continuity through the imaginative site of the dream and by suggesting spinsterhood can be a positive choice, Brooke simultaneously invites a reconsideration of how sexual and economic categories as a whole are to be valued. The spinster’s exclusion from the ideal of domestic life is here rewritten as her inclusion in a system of values structured in terms of the sufficiencies of personal liberty. This was a theme that Brooke pursued from this first work, *The Old Maid*, into her novels, where she also continued to employ the device of a female character who resisted too easy categorization in sexual and economic terms. It is to her novels that this chapter now turns and, in particular, to an initial consideration of how the household, only implicitly present in *The Old Maid*, operates as the kind of imaginative site suggested in my discussion to this point.

Lady Julia Mandeville: ‘The sweets of dear domestic life’

Frances Brooke’s first novel, *Lady Julia Mandeville*, published in 1763, is in the Richardsonian mode; a sentimental, epistolary work which, like *Clarissa*, ends in the deaths of its hero and heroine. Both Lorraine McMullen and Barbara M.

Benedict identify the echoes of *Romeo and Juliet* in the novel’s depiction of

innocent lovers who die as a result of prejudice and misunderstanding.⁶⁷ While the former suggests that the parents ‘must bear a large share of the responsibility for the tragedy’, the latter indicates a wider social contextualization of that responsibility in ‘the tyranny of traditional prejudice and paternal power’.⁶⁸ The question of responsibility also arises in the novel’s examination of value systems, structured by Brooke in a variety of ways: from the ‘artificial situation’⁶⁹ that engulfs the hero and heroine as they succumb to the distresses of their sensibility; to the distinctive tonal and relational positionings of the novel’s two main letter-writers, Harry Mandeville and Lady Anne Wilmot (the heroine herself makes few contributions); and to the site of ideal domesticity structured in the representation of the household (and estate) of Julia’s parents, Lord and Lady Belmont. It is with this last that my discussion begins.

Harry Mandeville offers a sustained description and appraisal of life at Belmont, where he is a guest, in the novel’s opening pages. It is ‘perfectly domestic’, and it locates a site where ‘liberty, restrained alone by virtue and politeness, is the law’ (46). Brooke shows how he responds to Belmont as the ideal structuring of the values in which he has been educated by his father: from him ‘I receive, and learn properly to value, the most real of all treasures, independence and content’ (42). His father’s instructions that ‘the only real sweets of life’ are ‘health, peace, content, and soft domestic tenderness’ (63) underline this value conception. In drawing Harry’s attention to the pleasure Lord Belmont takes ‘in the sweets of dear domestic life, in the tender pleasing duties of husband and of father’ (64), Colonel Mandeville is modelling these values for his son by indicating a real

⁶⁷ McMullen, pp.56-7. Barbara M. Benedict, ‘The Margins of Sentiment: Nature, Letter, and Law in Frances Brooke’s Epistolary Novels’ in *ARIEL*, Volume 23, Number 3, July 1992, pp.7-25. For this particular point see pp.10-11.

⁶⁸ McMullen, p.56 and Benedict, p.10.

⁶⁹ Katherine M. Rogers, ‘Sensibility and Feminism: The Novels of Frances Brooke’ in *Genre II*, Volume 11, Number 2, Summer 1978, pp.159-71. This reference p.161.

exponent. Harry is responsive. Lord Belmont's scheme of life and ordering of his estate as 'manly, benevolent, enlarged, liberal' (65) earn his admiration. He writes of Belmont conveying 'the strongest idea of the patriarchal government' with Lord Belmont, at its head, 'a beneficent father surrounded by his children' (47). The conjugal dimension is similarly noted and praised, for the patriarchal Lord Belmont is matched by a wife who fulfils the ideals of domesticity in her running of the household. Harry writes of how 'The oeconomy of her house [...] is magnificent without profusion, and regular without constraint' (45). Moreover, that 'she does not disdain herself to direct' it is a specifically identified aspect of Lady Belmont's valuable qualities. The overall impression is of Belmont as a model household, a self-sufficient site of domestic completeness, structuring the ideals of a prevalent ideology.

Nancy Armstrong notes how eighteenth-century conduct books for women agree 'that the country house should be the site of the ideal household'.⁷⁰ In doing this, they not only model how 'any and all respectable households' should realize the ideal, but they also place at its heart the domestic woman, educated in 'a coherent set of economic policies for the management of the household'. She identifies a new privacy in the household's sources of money, based on investments rather than labour, which 'made the household into a self-enclosed world' where money is 'invisible, removed from the scene'.⁷¹ Although the effect is indicated more persuasively than the less convincingly substantiated processes by which it may have been produced, Armstrong's reading nevertheless presents an interesting model of the country house as a distinctively structured enclosure. This allows her further to suggest that 'the country house also carried with it some of the cultural

⁷⁰ Armstrong, p.69.

⁷¹ Armstrong, p.73.

residue of a self-sufficient economy'.⁷² The difference is in the form of value that this self-sufficient economy embraces, namely the skill and authority with which the woman conducts 'the oeconomy of her house' (45).

Before considering how these ideas can inform our reading of the Belmont household in Brooke's novel, it will be worth briefly recalling an additional model of self-sufficiency, that of the Aristotelian household. This is addressed by Heinzelman in *The Economics of the Imagination*, where he illustrates how Aristotle's usage of *oikonomia* (meaning 'household management' and from which our word 'economy' derives) links the ethical and political by grounding the state's organization, its self-sufficiency, on the self-sufficiency of the individual.⁷³ Within the household, 'economy describes the political (i.e., social) relationship between the household members as well as the material means by which that relationship should be maintained'.⁷⁴ Since natural economy entails the proper use of economic tools, of which money is one, and since the Aristotelian extension of the household requires 'that some kind of trade or exchange is necessary for the maintenance of self-sufficiency', those means themselves require right regulation.⁷⁵ This could be achieved by acknowledging sufficiency as the basis of economy, and sharing, rather than competing for, resources as the basis of exchange. This meant in turn acknowledging the 'absolute equivalency of commodities' and accepting money as 'a token of convenience', 'a means to self-sufficiency' rather than something desirable in its own right.⁷⁶

There is a bearing in this on Armstrong's argument that the eighteenth-century domestic woman's supervision of the household required the appropriate regulation of its material resources. This over-seeing of people and objects reveals

⁷² Armstrong, p.81.

⁷³ See the Introduction to this present study.

⁷⁴ Heinzelman, p.40.

⁷⁵ Heinzelman, p.55.

⁷⁶ Heinzelman, pp.39-41.

how forms of value other than monetary ones informed such practices. Indeed, the practices of the household are characterized by money's "disappearance" from the processes of exchange situated there, since those practices make a distinction between management and commerce. Aristotle's *oikonomia* accepts money as a means, not an end and, as Heinzelman points out, predates the notion of market mechanisms. Even if 'Aristotle's perspective, although not his actual principles, held sway until as recently as the eighteenth century',⁷⁷ Armstrong's identification of a 'cultural residue of economic self-sufficiency', quoted above, in the eighteenth-century country house suggests, however, a self-sufficiency based on a form of self-contained market system. This both marks the household as a self-enclosed world, as Armstrong notes, and also draws attention to the forms of value that characterized its operative practices.

To return to Belmont in *Lady Julia Mandeville*, the emphasis on the domesticity, diversity, liberty and generosity to be found there, tempered only by appropriate regularity and politeness, functions by matching Lord Belmont's 'manly' patriarchy with Lady Belmont's 'womanly' 'oeconomy'. Harry Mandeville's response to this 'charming family' (46) centres on the simplicity and naturalness of the life it promotes. A rustic ball recalls 'the idea of the fabulous pleasures of the golden age' (47), while an airing leads the guests 'to a rustic building, [...] the architecture of which was in the most elegant stile of simplicity' (60). Lord Belmont often retires there 'with his amiable family' in order 'to give himself up entirely to the uninterrupted sweets of domestic enjoyment' (61). Of Belmont house itself, Harry writes that it 'is magnificent to the utmost degree', situated on 'the summit of a slowly-rising hill', with 'the prospect of a fruitful valley' and the whole diversified with 'every charm of lovely, unadorned nature'

⁷⁷ Heinzelman, p.37.

(46-7). There is a sense here of an enclosed, enchanted world, sufficient to itself in the ideal it represents. It is a world from which the market is geographically and imaginatively removed. Lord Belmont relates how when he first came to Belmont, he found his tenants poor and miserable because ‘the town which was the market for my estate [was] filled only with people in trade, who could scarce live by each other’. By residing in the country himself, he encouraged his neighbours to do likewise and stimulated the town, ‘which raised the markets, and of consequence the value of my estate’ (77). The market is thus represented in terms of its positive benefits, but in removing it to the town and by emphasizing the hills, woods, rivers and valleys that surround and protect Belmont, an impression is given that it does not encroach on the country house life.

Money is also absent – though in a perversely conspicuous and therefore ambiguous way – in relation to the figure of Harry Mandeville. The ‘liberal education’ that has taught Harry ‘properly to value [...] independence and content’ rather than to ‘murmur because I was not born to affluence’ (41-2) designates the value system with which he identifies. Belmont structures this, as we have seen. It also houses the ideal of womanhood to which Harry aspires, first by marking Lady Belmont as the ‘best and most beloved of wives, of mothers, of mistresses’, whose ‘domestic character is most lovely’ (44-5) and, next, by identifying in her daughter, Lady Julia, ‘exactly what a poet or painter would wish to copy, who intended to personify the idea of female softness’ (42). Her purity, divinity, ‘the lively tenderness of her sentiments’, her ‘angel innocence’ and ‘winning sweetness’ (79) are continually asserted by Harry as he associates these qualities with his ideal of ‘the calm delight of domestic friendship’ (108) free of the sordid encroachment of money. That she possesses a vast fortune, while he – as he supposes and as his father instructs him – is ‘doubly bound to keep yourself from all temptation of

corruption or dependence, by living within your income' observing 'oeconomy' as 'the parent of independence' (101), makes him all the more determined not to appear to her 'in the light of a man who barter[s] the sentiments of his soul for sordid views of avarice or ambition' (87). His use of 'barter[s]' and its pejorative connotations of exchange or market mechanisms highlight the novel's apparent impulse to cast money out of the alternative economies it structures. These economies include the personal and moral economies of individual worth, together with the value systems this recognizes *and* the self-enclosed, non-market economy of rural domesticity. Yet, the notion that money should be excluded from domesticity is tested by Brooke in the form of the secret, preserved by Lord Belmont and Colonel Mandeville, which conceals Harry's real fortune and on which the tragedy of the novel turns.

It is not until the last stages of the novel that the reader is given access to an earlier correspondence between Lord Belmont and Colonel Mandeville. The Earl reveals that a clause 'kept secret in our part of the family' (183), connected to the title of Belmont, means that the estate will pass to Colonel Mandeville and his male heirs since the Belmont's only child is a girl. He proposes an 'inter-marriage between our children' (183) and that they should be educated 'in every accomplishment of the mind and person, which can make them lovely in the eyes of each other' (184). Colonel Mandeville agrees and willingly undertakes the responsibility for educating his son in preparation for this future role and position. However, he makes two stipulations: that 'my son may be educated in a total ignorance of the settlement in our favor' (186) and, as regards any future marriage, that 'our design may be kept secret from all the world, and in particular from the young people themselves' (185). The first will ensure Harry learns 'to esteem virtue

without those trappings of wealth and greatness which he will never hope to be possessed of' (186) and the second will allow their children autonomy of choice

This delay in revealing the secret allows Brooke to achieve a number of thematic and strategic effects. On the most immediate level, she can give the plot a satisfying developmental impetus and exploit the scope it provides for dramatic irony as Harry alone of the characters remains ignorant of what has been revealed. She can point up issues associated with gender-differentiated education, since the fathers agree Harry 'cannot [...] have too public an education', which will proceed from town, to university, to the tour of Europe 'whilst Lady Julia is advancing in every charm under the eye of the most excellent of mothers', at home, never to leave her 'household gods' since women's 'virtues blossom fairest in the vale' (185-6). At the same time as she articulates a theme close to her heart, namely that children should be free to choose their marriage partners, Brooke can thus highlight the limitations of the situation these parents have contrived. Educated for sentimental heroism, Harry's failure to openly declare his love for Julia shows plainly the impracticalities of the fathers' scheme. This emerges further in this novel's inversion of what was to be Brooke's preferred form of closure in later works. In *The History of Emily Montague*, as in *The Excursion*, Brooke likes to 'reward' her courtship pair with the unexpected accession to a large sum of money, which only occurs when the fictive context of the novel has worked through the notion that money can only ever be a gloss on 'true' values that are more rewarding and enduring. Her decision in *Lady Julia Mandeville* to write a tragic ending allows Brooke to convey to the reader (whose responses are also of course subject to the secret's delayed exposure) that it may not be possible to work the novel's values through in quite such a straightforward way.

In order to examine this point, we need to consider how the undercurrent of secrecy in the novel occupies – and problematizes – a territory where wealth is invariably present. There is an almost pathological impulse to remove and render secret the presence of wealth from any decision or action in which moral probity is implicated. (Harry quite literally dies in order to prove that money has had no influence on his conduct.) From Harry's horror of being seen as a man who 'barter[s] his soul' for money to Lady Julia's virtuous pride in 'having distinguished his merit without those trappings of wealth which alone can attract common eyes' (137), it is shown that economic considerations are aligned with a separate value system, whose workings are structured elsewhere. Brooke depicts this in the Westbrook household, which inverts the domestic ideal represented by Belmont. That Lord Belmont 'despises wealth' (58) is cited as the reason why these neighbouring households have not sought intimacy. Mr Westbrook, 'a rich, civil cit' (58), but with 'the merciless rapacity of an exchange-broker' (67), is matched by a wife who neglects the education of her only child 'being above the little vulgar cares of a family' (58). This child, a 'city girl', with 'an oppressive insolence to all, however worthy, who want that wealth which she owes to her father's skill in "Change-alley"' (59), thinks nothing of offering her hand to an embarrassed Harry. The contrast with the values structured by Belmont could not be more clear. Yet we need to be cautious in accepting that the self-evidently unsatisfactory Westbrook household posits the domestic values of Belmont as normative. It might be more accurate to read the Westbrook and Belmont households as representing two extremes, the one vulgarized, the other idealized; and this, together with Brooke's distrust of the processes of associating wealth with secrecy, invites us to consider not only how the question of money is to be accommodated within domestic discourse, but also how the strictures of the sentimental form can be organized to authorize such

discourse as an appropriate vehicle for articulating money as a theme. Brooke's solution to these problems in *Lady Julia Mandeville* centres on the figure of Lady Anne Wilmot.

Lorraine McMullen considers Anne Wilmot to be 'Frances Brooke's spokeswoman' whose 'forerunner is Mary Singleton'.⁷⁸ Her outspoken manner, her wit and her spirited questioning of social and domestic convention certainly mark Anne Wilmot's voice out as a distinctive counterweight (or antidote) to the novel's more sentimental sections. Her status as a widow ('of a very rich country gentleman' (45)) is seen as part of what defines her; and it is Harry Mandeville who first provides us with a portrait of her, focusing on her unhappy marriage to a man in the Squire Weston mould, given to hunting and 'riotous mirth'. His death 'left her young and rich, at full liberty to return to the chearful haunts of men, with no very high ideas of matrimonial felicity, and an abhorrence of a country life' (45). That she is both wealthy and 'at full liberty' indicates how the widow, as a sexual and economic category, could attain to some measure of independence, whilst within the more immediate context of the novel, her tested attitude towards marriage and the country house life positions her as a potential dissenter from the values of Belmont and the ideal of conjugal domesticity it represents. That Harry describes her as 'a coquette' and 'rather profuse in her expences' (46) serves to reinforce this impression.

The widow, as Alice Browne points out in *The Eighteenth-Century Feminist Mind* (1987), shared similar problems with all single adult women who were unmarried.⁷⁹ However, unlike spinsterhood, which 'could be seen as a state of perpetual dependence, in which a woman never quite grew up', there was a recognition that widowhood allowed women more independence, for 'Women who

⁷⁸ McMullen, p.60.

⁷⁹ Alice Browne, *The Eighteenth-Century Feminist Mind* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987). She discusses the widow's position in the eighteenth century, pp.53-56.

had married were more adult in the eyes of social convention than those who had not'.⁸⁰ More particularly, a widow was expected to be equipped to look after her late husband's interests and, even more importantly, his children. The widow was also free to choose who she married and, although remarriage was never actively encouraged, the sense remains that a widow could enjoy a more self-sufficient life than either an unmarried woman or a wife.⁸¹ In choosing this category as a prominent aspect of her novel, Frances Brooke was, then, signalling a strategic engagement with a figure whose sexual and economic stance would be seen to bear on the novel in significant ways.

One of the primary aspects of Anne Wilmot's function in the novel is as a foil to Julia Mandeville's extreme sensibility, and that of Harry. She has consciously to correct her description of them as 'these prudes' to 'these people of high sentiment' when Harry is in 'disgrace with Lady Julia, for only kissing her hand'. While Julia blushes and signals her displeasure with silence and melancholic reserve, Anne remarks 'he might have kissed my hand twenty times, without my being more alarmed than if a fly had settled there' (61-2). Contained in this is the sense of her wider experience, including sexual experience; a maturity which is further expressed in her tendency to infantilize the sentimental lovers by her ironic references to Harry as *Il divino Enrico* (57) and the '*caro Enrico*' (110) and by mediating their misunderstandings as if they were children. She notes one such reconciliation in 'the scene was amazingly pathetic and pretty: I am only sorry I am

⁸⁰ Browne, pp.54 and 55. See also Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work and Family*, who discuss the single woman's dependent position within the household, p.31. There is an interesting survey of attitudes to spinsters and widows, largely given in their own words and from contemporary sources, and their subsistence opportunities in Chapter 5, 'Spinsters and Widows', pp.198-232. Elizabeth Bergen Brophy, *Women's Lives and the 18th-Century English Novel* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991).

⁸¹ As with the spinster, there were plenty of negative portraits of the widow in contemporary literature, ranging from the venal and duplicitous Lady Brumpton in Richard Steele's play, *The Funeral: or Grief A-la-Mode* (1702) to the sexually enkindled Widow Wadman in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67).

too lazy to describe it' (88). Such setting up and cutting down is characteristic of her 'easy chit-chat manner' (86).

Yet it would be reductive to read Anne Wilmot's presence in the novel as no more than this, even if in general terms her character matches a recognizable type within the genre (one only has to think of Anna Howe in *Clarissa*, for example). The register of her characteristic style is what is important, for she is by no means unaware that her independence is privileged by her widow status. Her ironic suggestion that 'Widows [...] are in some degree the property of handsome young fellows who have more merit than fortune' (88) plays on her understanding that they are, in fact, the property of no-one, at the same time as it provides an oblique commentary on what underlies the paternal decision to promote Harry for his merits by concealing his possession of a fortune. She uses similar strategies in her responses to Lady Belmont, who is "'convinced you love Colonel Bellville'". Her spirited, if prevaricating, answers again claim the privilege of her status – "'am not I a widow?'" to structure a reasonable preference for "'the pleasantest life in the world'" as the "'mistress of my own actions'"; an autonomy incompatible with the "'tame, domestic, inanimate'" life of married women. However, Brooke cleverly shows Anne Wilmot's tone and rhythm becoming more controlled, more self-possessed as this scene develops, the verve of her interchanges with Lady Belmont giving way to a more sustained evocation of her position. "'Though a widow, and accountable to nobody'", she nevertheless acknowledges her feelings for Bellville and that although "'a victim'" to her first husband, life at Belmont and the model marriage of Lord and Lady Belmont have convinced her that "'marriage is capable of happiness to which an unconnected state is lifeless and insipid'" (133-5).

This accommodation to domestic values is not without its tensions, however, for as Lady Anne tells Bellville 'I give you warning, I shall make a most

intolerable wife', being 'volatile, light, extravagant and capricious: qualities ill suited to a matrimonial life' (188-9). The levity of her manner, her instinctive pull against the containment of marriage and her questioning of its values, which she tests against personal experience and self-knowledge rather than an internalized ideology or sentimental quest, mark these tensions. And a corresponding tension is embodied in the figure of the widow herself, for Anne Wilmot, as a widow, has the sexual experience and the adult status of a married woman, but she also participates in the courtship procedures of a young unmarried woman. The licensed ambiguities of this position generate a self-sufficient enjoyment of her sexual status, manifested in her self-confessed coquetry and her pragmatic system of values, which stands back from the sentimental code practised by the novel's other pair of lovers. Similarly, her robust attitude to her economic status, again as a widow, acts in the form of a corrective to the pathological wariness of money examined elsewhere. It is to a consideration of this point that I now wish to turn.

Whilst Lady Belmont practises discreet and regular 'oeconomy' at home and Lord Belmont quietly and benevolently regulates his estate, eschewing market mechanisms to produce a scene of 'virtuous industry' (63); while Lord Belmont and Colonel Mandeville agree to keep Harry's wealth a secret; and while Julia and Harry assert merit over fortune even though this leaves them uncertain of how they will ever be able to marry, it is Anne Wilmot alone who deals with the sheer practicalities of handling money in a realistic and sensible way. She calls herself extravagant and confesses herself to be a woman 'amongst whose virtues economy was never one of the most observable' and whose affairs 'are a little *dérangé*' (142). A distinction is being made in this last between the will and the ability to manage money carefully, for the comments appear in a passage that overtly demonstrates her skill at economic manoeuvring.

In a letter to Harry Mandeville, Lady Anne reveals that, under the terms of her husband's will, she can only enjoy her present widow's jointure on condition she does not marry again. Observance of this would allow her 'to give the estate to whoever I pleased at my death', otherwise it is to go to a niece of her husband's, Bell Hastings. To marry Bellville, himself a poor man, will therefore be to encumber him (as she sees it) with 'an indigent woman of quality'. In one of the novel's most interesting layerings, Anne thus finds herself in a similar position to Harry, 'with almost as little prospect of success'. She goes on to observe, 'this odious money is absolutely the bane of true lovers, and always contrives to stand in our way' (141-2). Yet unlike Harry's hystericizing of his situation, Anne Wilmot's impulse is to calmly pursue a way of resolving *hers*. Her plan is to enter into an agreement with Bell Hastings 'to divide the fortune, which will be forfeited to her on my marriage, and which it is in my power by living single to deprive her of forever' (142). This is brought about, and the compact of these two women thus dismantles the posthumous attempts of Mr Wilmot to control his widow's economic and sexual behaviour.

What Brooke achieves by this is a double register for reading the placement of 'odious money' in the domestic novel. Its discordant presence within sentimental aesthetics leads to its sanitizing (at least) and outright removal (if possible), but Brooke exposes in her plot the limitations of trying to render its presence as absence. Anne Wilmot shows that it is unhelpful to ignore money's presence – the only sensible course is to address its problematics by looking at it clearly. Brooke specifically uses Anne's widow status to make these points. Indeed, Lady Anne's alertness to how the structures of economic, sexual and, in the case of Belmont, domestic values operate is largely authorized by her being a widow and it is her voice that prevails at the novel's denouement when, as these structures strain and

break, she is the only one capable of continuing to function in an independent and rational way.

The tragedy is precipitated by Harry Mandeville's misreading of the wedding preparations taking place at Belmont. His adherence to the ideal represented by Lord Belmont, 'the best, the most mild of mankind' is broken, for he believes him to have 'turned a tyrant' (149) in preparing to marry Julia to his supposed rival, Lord Melvin. Having failed to receive the letter that reveals the secret of his wealth and which acknowledges him as Julia's destined husband, Harry returns hot-headedly to Belmont and is fatally wounded in a duel with Lord Melvin. Lady Julia does not long survive him. The site of ideal domesticity, its paradisaical self-containment, is thus transformed. 'The whole house is a scene of horror', Anne Wilmot writes to Bellville; it is 'as if the last day was come' (205). The allusion to the Day of Judgement is apt, for we are being invited to look critically at the sufficiencies of the value system that has produced such an outcome. This is made even more explicit in Lady Anne's observations: 'how is the gay structure of ideal happiness fallen in one moment to the ground!' (197). The ending of the novel in effect dismantles what has before been so carefully constructed and thereby challenges the sentimental impulse to structure as ideal those sites – the household, marriage and domesticity – which require a pragmatic approach to the sexual, social and economic complexities they entail. Lady Anne's words convey the instability – the insufficiency – present in an ideal that suggests self-sufficiency, but reveals a selective inclusivity, not least in its refusal to accommodate money in a realistic way.

One final scene illustrates the point. After the deaths of Julia and Harry, Anne Wilmot takes a walk 'in a little wilderness of flowering shrubs' where once she walked with Lady Julia. The imaginative force of the change produces a

‘reverie’, from which she awakes to find herself ‘at a distance from the house’, with darkness fast falling. Overwhelmed by the silence and sublime effects of Nature, she is seized by terror: ‘my limbs were covered with a cold dew; there is no describing my horrors’ (209-10). Functionally (and positionally), this recalls Mary Singleton’s dream in *The Old Maid*, whereby an imaginative space is structured to release in codified form the thematic tensions explored in the work at large. Here, we appear to be dealing with a transgressive episode – a nightmare vision, in a ‘wilderness’, removed from the safety of domestic enclosure, which all but obliges the independently-minded widow to assume the guise of a sentimental heroine. However, if we consider what has informed Lady Anne’s ‘reverie’ and what has allowed imagination to overwhelm her more characteristic rationality, we find it to be made up of all that Belmont structures as sentimentally and domestically ideal: the ‘matchless form’ of Lady Julia, the ‘tender ideas’ of ‘her parents gazing on her as she passes’, of the ‘smiling scene’, and of Harry, ‘the loveliest of mankind’. The superlatives are part of what Anne acknowledges to be a conscious decision ‘to indulge [...] to the utmost’ ‘all the voluptuousness of sorrow’ (209), a language that suggests both an economic and a sexual excess.

This, finally is what Brooke leaves us with in this novel: a recognition that such ideals are imaginatively seductive unless properly tested from a position that stands independently from them and hence is self-sufficient. The figure of the widow mediates this, for Lady Anne’s sexual experience allows her to undergo the seduction without forfeiting her moral authority to act as the novel’s voice of reason. She indulges the ideal – and imaginatively suffers for it – but she also stands outside it, economically and sexually independent of the securities it demands. Brooke’s method is to establish the sufficiencies of a particular form of personal economy in order to question the sufficiency of values structured by the

domestic ideal. In this work, that personal economy belongs to the figure of the widow. In her next work, the *History of Emily Montague*, the argument becomes, both literally and metaphorically, more provocative as her focus turns to the figure of the coquette.

The History of Emily Montague: 'The little commonwealth of woman'

'The men here are all dying for me,' Arabella Fermor writes to her friend Emily Montague. 'I can blush, look down, stifle a sigh, flutter my fan, and seem so agreeably confused – you have no notion, my dear, what fools men are' (1.96). With these words, the coquette establishes her voice in the narrative of *The History of Emily Montague* (1769) and signals a characteristic repertoire of behaviour and stances. But Brooke's Arabella Fermor is far removed from the trivial and morally vacuous Belinda of Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* after the addressee of which she is named.⁸² Describing herself as 'naturally artful' (1.96), Arabella clarifies that playing the coquette is, for her, a self-conscious strategy, one whose juxtapositions allow her an ironic dialogue between self and others in the epistolary format. In this sense, her coquetry becomes a way of texturing her engagement with the wider concerns of the novel – issues which include the nature of personal liberty, male-female relations and making marriage choices. It also juxtaposes the transparency of the artful coquette with a more complex interiority, at the same time as suggesting an inverse model of the transparency desired in the ideal woman of sensibility. The coquette's sighs, blushes, flutters and confusion share a vocabulary with sensibility and the seizing of this paradox, itself a flirtation with the linguistic

⁸² McMullen first suggests the link in *An Odd Attempt in a Woman*, pp.108-9. A detailed exploration of the connection forms the basis of 'Arabella Fermor, 1714 and 1769: Alexander Pope and Frances Moore Brooke' in Ann Messenger, *His and Hers: Essays in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986), pp.148-71.

and behavioural registers of female conduct, marks Arabella Fermor's – and Brooke's – fascination with ideas of freedom and power. If, as Adam Phillips has expressed it, flirtation is 'the (consciously or unconsciously) calculated production of uncertainty',⁸³ then, in situating Arabella's coquetry in the space between the feminine ideal and the borders of female transgression, Brooke uses those uncertainties in particular ways to authenticate forms of feminine empowerment. As I will argue, Arabella's coquetry is regulated by an acute form of self-awareness, one that is capable of controlling the ironies of complex relational positionings to structure a personal economy which defines itself through the very uncertainties it produces. At the same time as the figure of the coquette mediates this, she also, as I will show, in effect allegorizes women's relationship to a wider concept of economic and political power.

Arabella Fermor is one character in a group of three courtship pairings on which *The History of Emily Montague* focuses. Her relationship with Fitzgerald, Ed. Rivers' with Emily Montague and Temple's with Lucy Rivers, allows Brooke to organize her novel by producing contrasting and varied perspectives on marriage and personal liberty. Much of the novel is set in Canada, around the Quebec area, where Brooke lived for five years with her husband, who was chaplain to the British army there. Comparisons between English women, French women and the native Indian women, and the amount of freedom their differing laws and social customs afford them, are written into the novel's debate on female independence, while a broader political context is offered in the letters of Sir William Fermor, Arabella's father, who provides a commentary on the settlement of Canada by the French and British. The last stages of the novel return to England to work through the courtship plot and to establish this work's reading of the domestic ideal.

⁸³ See the Introduction to Adam Phillips, *On Flirtation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p.xvii.

It is Ed. Rivers who opens the novel's debate on male-female relationships and the question of personal liberty. He declares he is only interested in a woman 'who has a soul' (1.15) and who can 'converse with us on the footing of rational creatures' (1.17). He acknowledges that it is men who are responsible for curtailing women's natural rights to liberty and his identification of this point as crucial is shown in his observations on the native system of government. The women, he notes, 'acquire a new empire in marrying' and 'are consulted in all affairs of state' (1.22). He later expands on this position in a letter to his sister, having spent a fortnight in an Indian village. 'The sex we have so unjustly excluded from power in Europe have a great share in the Huron government' (1.67), he tells her, going on to say that 'we are the savages, who so impolitely deprive you of the common rights of citizenship,' and concluding, 'I don't think you are obliged in conscience to obey laws you have had no share in making' (1.69). This intellectual engagement with the structures of power brings the atmosphere of political concepts into the exploration of the marriage relationship. When Rivers later writes, again to Lucy, that 'I have always wished the word OBEY expunged from the marriage ceremony', his contention is that 'marriage, to give delight, must join two minds, not devote a slave to the will of an imperious lord', for any idea of 'subjection necessarily destroys that of love' (2.195). Brooke's purpose is to anatomize the idea of personal liberty in courtship and marriage by placing it within a framework of broader power relations and examining the tensions between the real and apparent sufficiencies by which they are regulated.

The novel's central relationship demonstrates this. Rivers and Emily Montague are drawn together by their sensibility, 'the magnet which attracts all to itself: [...] 'tis sensibility alone which can inspire love' (1.83) as Rivers puts it. His remarks are prescient for when he first meets and falls in love with Emily, she is

engaged to Sir George Clayton, a man characterized by his lack of sensibility, who he sees will not fulfil her. The first volume of the novel details Emily's struggles to extricate herself from this engagement, which she entered into willingly enough in accordance with the wishes of an uncle. 'I certainly love him' (1.115), she says, as she simultaneously wishes for 'a greater conformity in our characters, in our sentiments, in our tastes' (1.113). Her determination to break from him centres on her growing awareness of this incompatibility. 'My happiness is in friendship, in the tender affections, in the sweets of dear domestic life', she writes, while 'his is in the idle parade of affluence, in dress, in equipage' (1.155). Their conflicting values cry out that this is a marital mistake in the making and Brooke uses this to re-state her recurrent theme that the only worthwhile marriage is one based on equality and friendship and arrived at by personal choice. To this end, her narrative is peppered with critical references to parents who force their children's hands, exemplified by Lady H – who 'was sacrificed at eighteen, by the avarice and ambition of her parents, to age, disease, ill-nature and a coronet' (3.125).⁸⁴

Brooke, then, makes persuasive use of the fictive economy in order to layer questions about the nature of liberty. In the case of Rivers and Emily, the interplay between the imperatives of personal and social regulation is structured around sensibility's moral values – and valuings. Yet this leads to a curious shift, in which the qualities associated with the ideal woman of sensibility are linked with the very forms of power that exclude women and which are deemed unlawful in Rivers' analysis of political systems. In suggesting how women are left with 'no power but that of which we cannot deprive you, the resistless power of your charms' (1.69), Rivers adopts a language which is coloured by metaphors of subjection and enslavement. Emily 'seizes' the soul and her eyes 'hold you enchain'd by their

⁸⁴ Lady H-'s husband sounds reminiscent of Lord Dellwyn in Fielding's *History of the Countess of Delhwyn*.

bewitching sensibility' (1.41); and, whilst he writes to Temple of men's 'tyranny' in making 'the life of one half of our species tasteless' (1.177), he can also describe Emily in another letter as being 'in the full tyranny of her charms' (2.23).

This double-edgedness is characteristic of Brooke's approach. It establishes contextuality whilst situating *specificities* contingent on that contextuality in order to test and evaluate them. Here, as elsewhere, Brooke suggests that ideal value systems exert an imaginative sway which can implicate the individual in cultural tyrannies unless carefully and independently regulated. Rivers, as an enfranchized male, may depict himself as a willing slave to sensibility's ideal charms, but this privileging of the woman sounds dangerously hollow in the context of the wider claims he makes for women's rights. The tensions this reveals lie between the capacity for creating intellectual structures and the capacity for imaginatively regulating them, which Heinzelman, in its broadest sense offers as a definition of economy. His further reading of economy as encompassing the 'ability to discriminate between ends and means'⁸⁵ is also pertinent, for in representing the presence of self-consciousness in acts of regulation, it opens the way to considering the role of the personal economy in mediating between value systems. Whilst Brooke signals her dissatisfaction with value systems culturally designated as ideal by suggesting the psychological restrictions they impose, she also represents what it is to be self-sufficient and free from restraint – dangerously so according to normative cultural standards; and this she does by using the figure of the coquette.

Arabella Fermor has attracted more critical attention than any other Brooke character, a self-reflexive indication of the coquette's ability to fascinate. The pattern for seeing her in contrast to Emily Montague is well-established, the *Critical Review* of 1769 noting her 'vivacity' and Emily's 'softness', and it is a pattern

⁸⁵ Heinzelman, Preface, p.ix.

sustained in modern criticism, summed up by Katherine Sobba Green's noting of Brooke's practice of making 'a series of comparative studies of women'.⁸⁶ Arabella herself observes the contrast when she writes to Emily on the nature of love, which she finds to be 'a different plant in different soils; it is an exotic, and grows faintly, with us coquets; but [is] in its native climate with you people of sensibility and sentiment' (2.163). Her words, however, are significant for more than the simple contrast they make for, in employing the imagery she does, Arabella reveals the imaginative complexity that she regulates through self-awareness. Whilst the self-consciousness of 'us coquets' indicates the idea of coquetry as an intellectual exercise, the imagery of plants and soils and native climates aligns the coquette's viewpoint with the novel's wider concern with the issue of colonization. By considering Arabella's presence in the novel, and by examining the nature of the coquette's flirtatiousness, it is possible to move from seeing a straightforward contrastive role to reading how a specific personal economy is constituted within (and itself constitutes) the dynamics of the systems that surround the individual subject.

The strategies of Arabella's coquetry are associated with concealment and visibility. The coquette's behaviour – the sighs, the downcast eyes, the fluttering fans – employ a repertoire of highly visible gestures and postures, while her true intentions remain hidden. Arabella writes of the men she flirts with, 'I flatter them, and the dear creatures cannot resist it', gaining her reward in their admiration and the fact they are 'all dying' for her; but in the same letter (to Emily) she dismisses their credulity by observing, 'you have no notion, my dear, what fools men are' (1.96). In a later letter to Emily, she advises her to 'flirt with somebody else' to try

⁸⁶ The comments from the *Critical Review* are quoted in McMullen, p.112, where she discusses how the novel was received. For Katherine Sobba Green's comments see her chapter, 'Frances Moore Brooke: Emily Montague's *Sanctum Sanctorum*' in *The Courtship Novel 1740-1820: A Feminized Genre* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), pp.62-66. This reference, p.63.

the strength of her passion for Sir George (1.157), while she herself, loving ‘mightily to be foolish’, explains how she has ‘prevented any attachment to one man, by constantly flirting with twenty’ (1.181-3). ‘Without coquetry’, she asserts to Lucy Rivers, ‘tis in vain to expect admiration’ (1.144).

There is a dualism operating in this. The coquette’s flirtatious behaviour works by promising something it does not intend, rendering visible the possibility of consent whilst concealing a quite different set of intentions. Arabella flirts with twenty men to avoid attachment to one, but each man must be led to believe he is ‘the one’. By creating a marketplace of ‘flirtees’, in what looks like an inverse form of the marriage market, Arabella can devise her own rules for economically managing them by suggesting and withholding any form of direct choice. Yet the dualism operating here, and in that of visibility and concealment, is made more complex by virtue of the novel’s epistolary format, for in keeping her coquetry always visible to her correspondents as a strategy, Arabella reveals a behavioural stance whose deliberateness is open to herself and her addressees, but which must be concealed from the men with whom she flirts. Not only does this emerge in the sustained visibility of Arabella’s commentary on her own behaviour and purposes in her letters, but it is also embedded in the act of writing itself. For example, in remarking how her letters depicting the Canadian landscape show her to ‘cut a pretty figure in the descriptive way’ (1.99), we are simultaneously reminded of the ‘pretty figure’ the coquette aims to ‘cut’.

The coquette, then, situates around herself concurrences of representation and behaviour whose meanings are consciously dualistic. These characteristic phenomena are noted by Georg Simmel in a chapter on flirtation in *On Women, Sexuality, and Love* where he describes ‘the formula of all flirtation’ to be ‘the

simultaneity of consent and refusal', this constituting a dualistic form of conduct.⁸⁷ However, as he notes, this dualism must function as 'a vital exchange' rather than 'a static juxtaposition' in order to be significant as flirtation.⁸⁸ In other words, it is *simultaneity* (of consent and refusal) that is important. In commanding this, the flirt can produce uncertainty without being in a position of uncertainty herself. On the contrary, her visible conduct is likely to conceal inner resolve and sense of purpose, for as Simmel observes, the flirt can manipulate the dualism of consent and refusal so that 'her own unbiased personality stands in complete freedom'.⁸⁹

The importance of this in formulating a reading of the personal economy structured by the coquette will become clearer later. First, however, it offers ways of examining ideas of freedom and power in the novel. In flirtation, Simmel suggests, even if in symbolic or approximate form, the woman, 'is in a position to decide the fundamental questions of her life'. She has power in relation to men, 'exhibited in consent *or* refusal', which gives her 'the independence of the self [...] the autonomous existence that lies beyond the dominated oppositions'. Functioning through its position prior to decision, the power ends once the choice for consent or refusal is made. As Simmel indicates, flirtation is thus 'a means of enjoying this power in an enduring form'.⁹⁰ It is a point that Phillips also makes, suggesting that flirtation 'is a way of cultivating wishes, of playing for time',⁹¹ while Jane Sellwood, in her essay, 'Narrative as Coquette in Frances Brooke's "The History of Emily Montague"', links the control Arabella Fermor exerts through her letters to 'the short-lived power accorded to females during courtship'.⁹² As a coquette,

⁸⁷ Georg Simmel, *On Women, Sexuality, and Love*, translated and with an introduction by Guy Oakes (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), p.137.

⁸⁸ Simmel, p.137.

⁸⁹ Simmel, p.141.

⁹⁰ Simmel, p.141.

⁹¹ Phillips, Introduction, p.xix.

⁹² Jane Sellwood, "'A Little Acid is Absolutely Necessary': Narrative as Coquette in Frances Brooke's 'The History of Emily Montague'", *Canadian Literature*, 136, 1993, pp.60-79. This reference, p.61.

Sellwood argues, Arabella ‘manipulates the postponement of marriage’ so that she can ‘extend her self-empowerment indefinitely’.⁹³ The ‘continuous present’ of the letters reflects this and is itself engendered by a feminine space which makes visible the more habitually absent forms of female autonomy and power.

With this in mind, the significance of Arabella’s coquetry comes more sharply into focus. Phillips’ noting of flirtation as a transitional performance suggests how Arabella’s self-conscious role-playing can function as the pragmatic creation of ‘a space [...] in which aims or ends can be worked out’.⁹⁴ The novel reveals this most clearly in Arabella’s attitudes towards marriage. She is a strong advocate for freedom of choice, like Rivers greatly distrusting parental interference. Having written to Lucy that she intends to ‘marry a savage, and turn squaw’ because an Indian husband lets his wife ‘ramble five hundred miles, without asking where she is going’ (1.102), her next letter retracts because ‘the mothers marry their children without ever consulting their inclinations, and they are obliged to submit to this foolish tyranny’. This is a poor second to ‘the dear English privilege of chusing [*sic*] a husband’ (1.116). She develops this position in further letters to Lucy, observing that ‘Parents should choose our company, but never even pretend to direct our choice’ for ‘a conformity of taste and sentiment alone can make marriage happy, and of that none but the parties concerned can judge’ (2.34-5). Like Anne Wilmot she considers it wrong ‘that parents will educate creatures so differently, who are to live with and for each other’ (2.178-9). And to Rivers she writes how ‘it is really cruel of papas and mamas to shut up two poor innocent creatures in a house together’ when they would have been much happier separate (4.156). These views frame her relationship with Fitzgerald, who first prompts her to announce, ‘I am half inclined to marry’. In continuing, ‘I am not at all acquainted with the man I

⁹³ Sellwood, pp.68 and 70.

⁹⁴ Phillips, Introduction, p.xix.

have fixed upon' (1.144), she plays ironically with the idea of freedom of choice, juxtaposing its personal relevance with the broader implications of her argument.

Choosing itself is something she comments on seriously and forcibly. Her charge is that very few men 'have spirit to think for themselves' and that they often decline marrying the woman of their choice because she is 'not thought handsome by the generality of their companions'. She considers women 'above this folly', much wiser than 'these mighty lords', who 'instead of playing the part in life which nature dictates to their reason and their hearts, act a borrowed one at the will of others' (2.81-2). What is striking here is her condemnation of men for playing a part. It is, after all, what she herself is doing as a coquette. However, whereas men act against reason and at the will of others, she controls her role-playing as an independent and conscious choice. The emphasis falls on her pragmatism in using coquetry's power to scrutinize marriage, both institutionally and personally, before making any decision.

This movement between the debating of wider social, political and moral issues and their appropriation to a personal, individual sphere of experience is characteristic of Brooke's modes of fictive organization in the novel. The effect is to manifest processes of debate which model themselves on the coquette's manipulation of the dualism of consent and refusal. This is in part implied by Simmel's contention that a woman 'can flirt with her non-flirtatious conduct',⁹⁵ but, by extending the idea, taking it beyond the confines of female conduct, it can also be argued that a woman can use the formula of flirtation towards all and any form or system, where that flirtation operates as an intellectual exercise rather than a behavioural performance. To take Arabella as an example, in deciding to marry Fitzgerald – the point at which, incidentally, she feels her 'spirit of coquetry decline

⁹⁵ Simmel, p.146.

every day' (2.13) – she is consenting to *a* marriage, *this* marriage, based on the values structured by her personal economy; but is refusing the idea of marriage structured elsewhere – the unequal marriage, which is a 'species of prostitution' (4.125) or the marriage 'on prudent principles', which is 'a horrid sort of an affair' (4.156). The simultaneity of her consent and refusal here belongs, not to the characteristic posturings of the flirt, but to an independently exercised intellect working as part of a personal economy that can be designated as self-sufficient in nature and scope. A closer examination of this point will show how the coquette can be said to allegorize women's relationship to political power.

Arabella remarks in a letter to Lucy Rivers that she thinks 'no politics worth attending to but those of the little commonwealth of woman', continuing, 'if I can maintain my empire over hearts, I leave the men to quarrel for every thing else' (1.206). In claiming her concern is for the domain of affect, typically identified as feminine, it may seem odd that she chooses a term, 'empire', more commonly operative in the sphere of male political power.⁹⁶ Furthermore, in an earlier letter, she states her 'prodigious aversion to divided empire' (1.96) when Emily's arrival threatens to end her monopoly on male attention. This serves to confirm what Ben R. Schneider has identified as an attribute of the coquette, namely that 'of building empires over males' by 'attracting multiple admirers';⁹⁷ but it is also important to remember here the novel's Canadian setting and the commentary – most notably in the letters of Rivers, William Fermor and of Arabella herself – on the themes of colonization and settlement.

William Fermor speaks of the settling of the colony in terms of conquest and observes how it is in England's 'interest to have colonies' because 'our very being

⁹⁶ Sellwood makes this point as part of her discussion. See p.64 of her article in *Canadian Literature*, Number 136.

⁹⁷ Ben R. Schneider, 'The Coquette-Prude As An Actress's Line in Restoration Comedy During the Time of Mrs Oldfield' in *Theatre Notebook*, Volume 22, Number 4, Summer 1968, pp.143-57. This reference, p.146.

as a powerful commercial nation depends on them'. In order to maintain the colonies at as little expense as possible, the acquisition of 'subjects' is an 'invaluable treasure', particularly when they 'adopt so much of our manners', together with 'our' language, religion and laws, to make them 'more useful members of the society to which they belong' (2.228-33). While this mirrors the coquette's empire-building, whereby she seeks dominion over as many men as possible, Arabella's observations on the colonization of Canada criticize the 'avarice' which saw the original settlers take 'a great deal more [land] than they could cultivate' (1.126). She later upbraids Rivers with the charge 'You men are horrid rapacious animals, with your spirit of enterprise, [...] ever wanting more land than you can cultivate, and more money than you can spend' (4.66). There is a shift, it appears, between masculine and feminine empire-building. It is a shift, moreover, which Brooke seems to link at a no more than metaphorical level. However, if we re-introduce the idea of consent and refusal, a different formulation emerges.

In her essay 'Consent, Coquetry and Consequences', Gillian Brown demonstrates how consent operates in terms of the individual's relation to authority.⁹⁸ Under Lockean consent theory, individuals consenting to government also accept constraints upon themselves and, in doing so, embody cultural authority. From this model, Brown argues that there is agency in consent, which expressing as it does the individual's relation to authority, including subordinated populations such as women, 'suggests that individuals can appropriate consent for their own purposes'.⁹⁹ Brown goes on to consider how coquetry, in its manipulation of female subjection, provides a way of examining the appropriation and artful use of consent.

⁹⁸ Gillian Brown, 'Consent, Coquetry and Consequences' in *American Literary History*, Winter 9:4, 1997, pp.625-52.

⁹⁹ Brown, p.627.

In Brooke's work, the coquette's manipulation of consent and refusal creates an empire built on subordination of men to her power. On the one hand this replicates, in reconfigured form, the empire-building of men based on conquest and colonization; but on the other, as Arabella steps back from her role as coquette, it exposes the rapacity that underlies all such empire-building. Arabella's ability to hold this dual position reveals that the appropriation of consent, in this instance, does not turn so much on the artful use the coquette makes of it, as on Arabella's capacity to assume and relinquish the role of coquette as part of her self-determination. For if the coquette's self-empowerment ends with decision, then the manipulation of subjection through coquetry is also limited in its scope. In this way, coquetry can be said to allegorize women's relationship to political (and economic and social) power. However, in *choosing* to play the coquette (an important distinction), Brooke shows how Arabella locates the agency in consent by asserting her right to independent choice as an individual relating to the cultural authority that that consent embodies. As she puts it, 'I had rather even judge ill, than not judge for myself' (2.82).

In *Contingencies of Value*, Barbara Herrnstein Smith suggests that the choices a subject makes will always be dependent on his or her personal economy.¹⁰⁰ That economy is 'constituted by the subject's needs, interests, and resources – biological, psychological, material, experiential, and so forth'. It is not fixed, any more than the environment to which it is in relation is fixed; rather, like any economy, it is a 'continuously fluctuating or shifting system'.¹⁰¹ As we have already seen, Smith points out how value is the product of the dynamics of a system, where value is contingent and to be located in the relation among variables. It could be argued from this that, if the environment to which the personal

¹⁰⁰ Herrnstein Smith, p.176.

¹⁰¹ Herrnstein Smith, pp.30-31.

economies of women are in relation subordinates them to a culture which restricts their economic, political and social power, then coquetry antagonizes the authority of that culture by suggesting a personal economy of needs, interests and resources which wilfully disregards its precepts on feminine conduct. The coquette thus compromises patriarchal notions of woman's ideal value by using flirtation to make herself seem more valuable, more desirable, the very attributes which according to patriarchal culture her behaviour in fact subverts.

That the flirt can produce uncertainty whilst her own personality stands in freedom is a point already noted as being made by Simmel. Where her coquetry is a self-conscious strategy, as it is with Arabella Fermor, then the uncertainties associated with it can stand in the form of value's contingencies and variables, the relationships among which she is sifting as part of her personal economy. In other words, Arabella's personal economy is not dependent on her coquetry, rather – in the sense that it is a role adopted by deliberate choice – her coquetry is dependent on her personal economy. As such, she commands the space it offers for working out aims or ends, as Phillips puts it; or, under Heinzelman's formulation, discriminating between the ends and means which regulate all intellectual structures under economy in its broadest sense.

Of course, ideals – of, say, femininity, conduct, domesticity – are themselves products of personal economies and form part of the cultural environment which affects each individual standing in relation to it. However, by enacting choice, we are reminded of the agency that is located in consent. While Emily desires no will but Rivers' and he willingly subjects himself to the tyranny of her sensibility, Arabella declares she can never be 'a poor tame household dove' (2.117) and bases her decision to marry on a pragmatic evaluation of her future

happiness. Her choice is dependent on a personal economy that has used coquetry to discriminate between independent and culturally-authorized readings of value.

As the emphasis in the last volume of the novel turns to the domestic life, Brooke moves between different perceptions of ideal domesticity. Rivers rapturizes on ‘domestic felicity’ (4.124), apostrophizes ‘Sweet home! only seat of true and genuine happiness!’ and addresses odes to the household gods (4.145), but Arabella’s concerns focus less on the idea of home than on her relationship with her husband. In her final letter she declares, ‘I don’t insist upon it, that there is nothing agreeable in the world but them’ [that is husbands] and ‘I am not, however, quite sure I shall not look abroad for a flirt’ (4.205 and 207). Her parting shot in the novel is to break off her letter because ‘I am interrupted by a divine colonel in the guards’ (4.208). While Rivers has translated the domestic ideal into a reality at Bellfield, improving his house and cultivating his garden to make it ‘a paradise worthy its lovely inhabitant’ (4.54), Arabella merely observes ‘My dear papa talks of taking a house near you, and of having a garden to rival yours’ (4.206). Rather than a home, whether as real bricks and mortar or as a social construct, it is more Arabella’s choice that she ‘inhabit’ coquetry. In this way, Brooke diversifies value registers surrounding domestic ideology, using the figure of the coquette to manoeuvre between consent to, and refusal of, its ideals. The coquette, in effect, chooses, in Phillips’ phrase, to cultivate her wishes rather than her home and garden and thus asserts her self-sufficiency in relation to domesticity’s ideal structuring of woman and household.

***The Excursion*: The ‘native consciousness of worth’**

Brooke presents Arabella Fermor in *The History of Emily Montague* as a consistently attractive character. This is not to say, of course, she thinks all women should be coquettes. Arabella’s self-awareness, her ability – and preparedness – to judge herself (and for herself), her intellectual engagement with her environment and society are all carefully marked out to establish a sense of her personal integrity. Coquetry is Brooke’s means of measuring the possibilities for female self-determination. In her next novel, *The Excursion* (1777), Brooke explores the theme further. The novel’s heroine, Maria Villiers, is a young woman of sensibility, natural in all moral and physical graces, ‘Warm, sincere, simple, unaffected, undisguised’ (7). She is also ambitious. This most unfeminine of traits manifests itself in two ways. The first is acceptable within the dictates of female conduct and of the sentimental novel: she aspires to an ideal marriage with a man whose sensibility matches her own. However, in stipulating that he should possess a ducal coronet, Maria’s ambition is shown to deviate into what looks like venality.

Brooke further complicates the issue by revealing Maria to possess literary ambition: *The Excursion* is one of the few novels published by women in the eighteenth century which represents a woman writer as its main character. In showing, moreover, that Maria intends to make money from her writing, Brooke reveals how this novel, more than any other of her works, will use a domestic discourse to examine matters of specifically financial concern.

Maria’s journey to London at the beginning of the novel is fired by the sight of a ‘superb carriage’ (5) belonging to a titled lady passing by her country home. It awakens in her a desire to herself possess a coach, a coronet and a title, and she knows that London, as the place where ‘beauty and merit were allowed their sterling value’ (8), is where she needs to be. Brooke plays – here and throughout,

and employing an ironic register – with the conventions of the sentimental novel. Maria is safely contained in her uncle's garden in 'the little paradise of Belfont' (9) when the carriage passes by. She has a docile twin sister who can muster only 'languid admiration' for the 'splendid equipage' (5). A lengthy passage of description notes her 'chestnut tresses' and 'natural ringlets', the 'pearly whiteness' of her teeth, the elegance of her form and 'a gracefulness I know not how to define' (7). Yet for all Maria's 'beauty and merit', by using the expression 'sterling value', Brooke deliberately confuses ideas of personal and economic value. Maria's journey to London not only initiates the familiar romance plot of mistakes, difficulties and pain leading to union in ideal marriage, it also sees Maria's entry into not one, but two marketplaces: the marriage market of her immediate concerns *and* the literary marketplace too.

Brooke here seizes on the eighteenth-century novelistic tradition of exposing innocent girls to the dangers of the city, both to use the space it provides as a rare period of female autonomy outside the domestic sphere and to test its possibilities as a period of economic autonomy. To this end, Maria is financially autonomous when she leaves the household gods of Belfont. An unexpected legacy of two hundred pounds, 'which she was to employ in whatever manner she thought proper, without accounting to her guardian' (9) enables her to make the journey. She is also carrying additional resources with her: 'a mine unopened', namely genius, and that genius made concrete in the form of an epic poem, a novel and a tragedy. 'Though she had expectations from the two first', we are told, 'it was on the last that she placed her dependence' (16). Although this resource is to be held in reserve for the time being, Brooke is already signalling a range of value hierarchies in the relationship between the writer and her works. The hierarchy of literary value, whereby the tragedy is privileged over other forms, is most evident, but, in

indicating that the works represent both a psychological and a financial investment for their author, Brooke suggests how economic and affective registers can be structured in relation to one another.

This structuring operates by simultaneity. As Maria goes into London society and is seduced into living beyond her means, her spending is always seen in the context of her future prospects as the wife of Lord Melvile, with whom she has fallen in love. The whole is surrounded by the motifs and atmospheres of speculation. Maria's first encounter with Lord Melvile occurs when for the first time in her life, and against her better judgement, she is playing cards for money. The stake of twenty guineas represents an enormous part of her 'little exchequer' (22), but she is fortunate enough to win and leaves the table thirty guineas better off. At the very same moment she hears Lord Melvile announced. 'She turned hastily at the sound of a title; a sound for which she had listened impatiently the whole evening in vain' (22). Brooke leaves it unclear whether we are to read the link between these events as causal or fortuitous and, in doing so, she deliberately manipulates the metaphors of speculation to suggest how gambling's 'dialectic between individuals deciding their actions and a larger, engulfing world of forces over which humankind [is] powerless' can replicate the extent and limitations of women's power over choice – and money – in courtship.¹⁰² Maria's 'sanguine temperament' leads her to see a single certain outcome of her emotional speculation (that is, marriage to Lord Melvile), but not the potential range of results that gambling of its nature makes possible.

As she continues to play in order to be in the only society where she is likely to meet Lord Melvile, Maria suffers 'a very sensible and alarming diminution of her finances' (40) and is in 'danger of being distress before her great plan was

¹⁰² Thomas M. Kavanagh, *Enlightenment and the Shadows of Chance: The Novel and the Culture of Gambling in Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p.3.

accomplished' (52). At the same time, she is persuaded by Lady Hardy, one of the leaders of fashionable society to set up a fine establishment of "a house, servants, carriage, and a thousand other necessary *et ceteras*" (54). Just as money in gambling is always in circulation, the conversion of Maria's wealth to capital, an exchange value, suggests how certainty is always deferred, possession is illusory and nothing is ever quite owned. Maria's fine establishment is never paid for. The services she buys from hairdressers, milliners and servants are so many accumulated debts. Even her heart, 'formed with the quickest sensibility' (38), is given away unwisely. Of course, Maria believes it is given in the most valuable exchange of all, her heart for Lord Melville's, an emotional reciprocity which is to be affirmed by their marriage. That he intends her as his mistress only, 'part of his equipage', and his main worry is 'how he should regulate the future household, and state the necessary expences, of our heroine' (77) after his marriage to the affluent Miss Harding, emphasizes how masculine financial power is exercised to the detriment of women. Not only will his wife's money finance his mistress, but the use of the word 'equipage' constructs Maria as an object.¹⁰³ The notion of speculation, sharing an origin in *speculari*, which also means to look at, reinforces this, reminding us of how women are constructed as objects of the male gaze.¹⁰⁴

Brooke, thus, merges into simultaneity the relation of Maria's financial and emotional experiences in the novel. The precise accounting of her ready money – twenty nine pounds and eleven shillings at one point (58), a one hundred and twenty-eight pound deficit at another (65) – is matched by chronicling the nuances of her impulsive but genuine love for Lord Melville. The merging is also represented in Maria's relationship to her literary works, for it is only when her debts are fast

¹⁰³ For an explanation of the term 'equipage', see the notes to Backscheider and Cotton's edition of *The Excursion*, p.165.

¹⁰⁴ Heinzelman makes this point in the *Economics of the Imagination*, pp.35-6. He discusses how the economic sense of 'speculation' is a new meaning. The original denoted 'vision', with the implication of the mirror action of *speculum*, also suggesting inward reflection or contemplation.

accumulating that she thinks of these in specifically economic terms. In calculating now 'the ideal profits of her literary performances' (65), she estimates the value of her epic poem at one hundred pounds, the novel at two, and her chief dependence, the tragedy, at five hundred pounds. The sum of eight hundred pounds will relieve her of all debt. Her original intention, however, was to wait until she was Lady Melvile to present her play, not for reasons of propriety, but because 'the performance of a woman of quality would naturally attract general attention, and appear with double éclat' (52). Maria actively courts maximum publicity for her work. She wants success: 'she was on fire to give her tragedy to the public' (57). Her works are not only an economic resource, but something in which she has an emotional investment, and this is emphasized when Brooke describes Maria going to bed (after further losses at cards) only to 'dream[ed] of Lord Melvile, and her tragedy' (52).

The effect of this merging of economic and affective realms of experience is an important part of Brooke's strategy. Although Maria is not the first or the last sentimental heroine to get into financial difficulties, the robust way in which she seeks solutions to her problems, her acceptance of full responsibility for her debts and her attempts, however misguided, to seize the economic initiative are unusual.¹⁰⁵ That she fails in her efforts is not entirely due to her naiveté and sanguine temperament. Rather, Brooke suggests, she is defeated by her inability to discriminate the different rules of engagement demanded by the economic sphere of individual moral experience and, as such, she confuses their metaphorical with their practical function in economic discourse. Two scenes illustrate the point.

¹⁰⁵ Compare this with Burney's Camilla for example, whose financial imprudence and steady accumulation of debts lead her into ever more serious entanglement, resulting in her mental breakdown. (The novel is discussed in Chapter Four of this study.) Maria is, perhaps, more reminiscent of Fielding's Ophelia, although Brooke's use of irony has a more comic dimension than Fielding's.

In the first, Maria imprudently allows Lord Melvile to visit her for a midnight tête-à-tête, in the ‘unhappy delusion’ (91) that he will propose to her. This appears confirmed when he tells her that ‘the happiness of his future life depended entirely on passing it with her’ (91). He proceeds to discuss settlements. Maria understands him to mean marriage settlements; Lord Melvile’s meaning is quite otherwise. Brooke’s narrator draws attention to the misunderstanding, pointing out that Maria’s ‘idea of the word settlement differed very essentially from his lordship’s’ and describing the latter’s expressions as ‘equivocal’ (91). While Maria draws on the register of sentiment to tell him ‘she loved him for himself alone, and was indifferent to every other consideration’, Lord Melvile moves easily between registers, well able to express himself in her terms of emotional exchange, but also commanding the terms of economic transaction to which and for which she lacks access and authority. Although Maria’s definition of settlement is not unreasonable since she interprets the word according to its more common usage, she withdraws from its economic, and does not see its transactional implications. Instead she domesticates it, making it a metonym for marriage and privileging it as an affective rather than an economic term by trusting to Lord Melvile’s ‘generosity and nobleness of sentiment’ (91) to act appropriately by her. She is, in fact, relying on Lord Melvile’s recognition of her ‘sterling value’, an expression that, in the context, looks more than ever ironically laden.

In the second scene, Lord Claremont, Lord Melvile’s father, visits Maria on his son’s behalf to buy her off, under the misapprehension she is his son’s discarded mistress. He is polite and agreeable. He invites her confidence, assures her of his son’s sincerity in previously intending to make a settlement on her for life. Referring to Lord Melvile’s imminent marriage, he thanks her for her past favours and expresses his willingness to set her up with another lover. He finishes by

offering her a pay-off of five hundred pounds. There is no equivocation here and Maria's 'mind, supported by its own native consciousness of worth, rose in proportion to the insult received' (112). Valued at five hundred pounds by Lord Melville's father – another reading of her 'sterling value' – Maria's instinctive response is that the value lies elsewhere, in the mind, in the self, in the 'native consciousness of worth'. In disdainfully rejecting Lord Claremont's offer and acknowledging her own culpability in allowing 'external advantages' to have had any part in attracting her to Lord Melville, Maria is asserting her right to be respected for her birth, virtue, independence and openness; she is also signalling her understanding that economic and moral vocabularies, although shared, model quite different value systems.

James Thompson has argued that experiences such as Maria's constitute a recognizably eighteenth-century narrative, the 'narrative of prey and debt' in which 'women are primarily represented as vulnerable to male sexual and financial manipulation and aggression'. The eighteenth-century sentimental novel will typically show women's failure in the public sphere, their financial activity leading to debt and disaster, this confirming their need for male protection and 'situating women ever more firmly and unequivocally in the discourse of domesticity'.¹⁰⁶ Brooke, as a seasoned writer of sentimental fiction, uses this narrative as the template for her novel, but not to model a conventional ideology of female domesticity. Her interest lies not in presenting Maria's failures as a confirmation that women should be confined to the domestic sphere; rather it lies in investigating *why* they are failures. She shows that women's attempts at economic self-determination are compromised by the roles and values they are allowed by the prevailing systems, not, as it is often construed, because of their own culpable

¹⁰⁶ Thompson, p.159.

rejection of their 'proper' space, the domestic. In short, Brooke again challenges the notion of the domestic ideal as a structuring of sufficiencies passively accepted rather than imaginatively regulated.

When Lord Claremont offers Maria five hundred pounds to buy her off, it is perhaps no coincidence that this is the self-same figure that Maria set as the value of her tragedy. Her valuation owes as much to her overly optimistic temperament as it does to a genuine sense of pride in her literary achievement, for it is over-inflated; but Lord Claremont's valuation, we infer, is based on a clear understanding of the going-rate. It is through such connections that Brooke examines how the authorization of value occurs and in who or what that authorization lies. This is where Maria's role as an author becomes important. In representing Maria as a writer, Brooke takes the initiative in depicting the issue of female work in terms of its value in a range of economies – the literary, the personal, the moral and the monetary. In doing so, she shows Maria as an economic agent at a time when middle-class women were ideologically separated from paid economic activity. Since such activity was only tolerated when necessity forced it and since writing was perceived as one of the few genteel means by which middle-class women could earn money, it might be argued that Brooke was hedging her bets. However, Maria's necessity is born of extravagance and gambling and is therefore ^{open to} ~~suspicion~~, as is her pride in and ambition for her works; what is more, Brooke shows her as a woman writer with works complete and ready to sell, not as a woman taking up her pen in financial distress. Brooke thus emphasizes the works in specific ways. They function as a declaration of agency, they are economic resources and, unlike Lord Melville's heart and the goods and services she acquires on credit, they are Maria's outright possessions, her independent property. Furthermore, in the sense that they are the products of her 'creative imagination', the works represent an imagined

private space which can be symbolically linked to the domestic environment. In this way, Brooke can use Maria's relationship to her works to figure women's relationship to domestic goods within the household; and her management of those works in the literary marketplace to figure women's management of the household economy.

In the first place, Maria's epic poem, novel and tragedy belong to the domestic sphere. They were written there and are imbued with its privacy – doubly so, since they were written in secret. This suggests the very personal nature of Maria's identification with her work. In travelling to London, the works, like Maria, enter the public sphere, but it is only the tragedy that she offers for sale. Moreover, she requires a male intermediary to negotiate this for her. Brooke provides the elderly and benevolent Mr Hammond, a foil to the sexually and financially aggressive male depicted elsewhere, but also a sign that Maria's agency must be screened. Mr Hammond fails. The theatre manager evades any commitment to read, let alone stage the play. Brooke herself had met with similarly evasive tactics when she offered one of her tragedies to David Garrick at an earlier stage of her career. We now hear her own commentary on the writer's struggle for economic self-sufficiency in the words of Mr Hammond, which refer to, “the unhappy train whom dire necessity oblige to submit to humiliations, from which the free spirit of genius flies with horror” (60).

Yet it does not occur to Mr Hammond that Maria might be activated by economic need. He assumes that ‘fame was the only object she had in view’ and tells her by way of consolation for her disappointment that writing for the theatre is ‘a pursuit in which her sex, her delicacy of mind, her rectitude of heart, her honest pride, and perhaps her genius, were all strongly against her success’ (83). It is no accident that gender, followed by moral and personal qualities, is placed before any

mention of her ability. We also learn that Mr Hammond has concealed the fact of the play being the work of a young lady. Maria, on the other hand, believes 'He should have urged, that the piece in question was the production of a woman' (86) as one of its chief selling-points.

This divergence in the way of constructing things highlights the imaginative difference between Maria's individualized investment in personal possessions and goals and Mr Hammond's representation of her in terms of the feminine ideal. In *The Meaning of Things* (1981), Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton consider how objects function as expressions of the owner's self and how 'most people' use 'symbolic objects to express dimly perceived possibilities of their selves to serve as models for possible goals'.¹⁰⁷ When someone invests attention in an object, the 'object becomes "charged" with the energy of the agent'. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton call this attention 'psychic energy' and explain how it is lost in the sense that the attention it invests cannot be used for other purposes. However, the loss becomes a gain 'if as a result of the investment the agent achieves a goal he or she has set for his or herself'.¹⁰⁸ The gain is seen as a reward in terms of the self. We might say, then, that Maria has invested her psychic energy in her works, but also in what she purposes to accomplish by them. The first remains a gain, reflected in her expressions of self-esteem: in the case of her tragedy she avers 'the merit of this piece' in which 'she felt she had succeeded beyond her warmest hopes' (16). But the second, under this reading, is lost psychic energy because her goal and the actualization of self in it is not accomplished. What Brooke achieves by this is a nuanced reading of how female agency (including economic agency), symbolized by the works, is culturally circumscribed. At the same time, she shows how the works can symbolize aspects of the self as imaginative expressions of psychic

¹⁰⁷ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). This reference, p.28

¹⁰⁸ *The Meaning of Things*, p.8

energy. As such, and because they remain Maria's possessions, they demonstrate a form of self-possession which can be described as self-sufficient because its resources are located in 'the energy of the agent'.

These ideas are explored further in the later sections of *The Excursion*. As Maria's attempts to place her tragedy fail and as she tries to decide whether to write a narrative of her meeting with Lord Claremont to send to Lord Melvile (who she convinces herself has been maligned by his father), a very different manuscript is about to hit the presses. Lady Blast, one of the leaders of fashionable society, has been keeping Maria under observation for some time. As long as it appeared possible Maria might marry Lord Melvile, Lady Blast has held her hand. Now she brands Maria as a 'little adventurer' (98) and sets about preparing a manuscript of the scandal of 'Miss V-ll-rs'. The 'malevolent history' (130), which falls into the hands of a compositor to a scandalous magazine, asserts that Maria has been 'educated by her supposed parents expressly for the purposes of prostitution'. She was 'sold at seventeen to Mr. Hammond' and has been 'supported by him in an expensive style of life, in order to draw in some young man of fashion to marry her'. Having been discarded by Lord Melvile, she is 'now on sale to the highest bidder' (131).

The substance of the manuscript thus restates the motif of women as exchangeable tokens within a market that sets an economic value on them. But in stressing the scandalous and 'malevolent' nature of the work, Brooke undermines its validity, both in maligning Maria and as a form. In a consciously interpolated chapter at this point, Brooke makes a forceful attack on 'the present fashionable manufacture of printed calumny' (117) and continues to air the issue of how value is to be understood. The chapter is placed outside the novel, being carefully identified as a digression, and what can be understood as Brooke's own voice

overrides that of her narrator. Her attack is on the 'venal' pen of the writer 'tempted by a gain more shameful than that which pays the midnight robber' (117). Brooke's own act of authorial autonomy challenges the effect of this venality, for printed calumny's reliance on destroying 'all which can distinguish one human being from another' (117) is checked by the chapter's assertion of self-sufficiency within the scheme of the novel.

Brooke's authorial assertion also serves to make a connection between the real writer, the contrasting representations of Maria and Lady Blast as writers, and the forms and purposes of the works they produce. Lady Blast's appropriation of Maria in her manuscript is a cynical corruption of the agency which Maria's authorship represents as a positive investment of self – doubly cynical since its effect is to destroy all essence of individuality in the traduced subject; while the real writer, Brooke, uses Lady Blast's act of appropriation to symbolically replicate masculine appropriation of women within the prevailing economic system. This emerges when, in showing how the reader is complicit in literary slander by demonstrating an insatiable appetite for its production, Brooke constructs that reader as male. She demands who the next victim will be: 'The amiable friend of your choice – the sister endeared to you by the tender ties of blood – the blooming daughter you educated with such anxious care – ' (118). The language belongs to the register of affective value, but by stressing how the peace of mind 'of the most virtuous individuals' can be sacrificed 'on the merciless altar of Envy' (118), Brooke is also playing with the idea of status, expressed in slander's superior claims for the attention of its readers.

It is the control over the attention of others that Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton cite as one example of how the status-giving role of things operates. 'Status symbols', they suggest, 'express a very general aspect of their

owners – their power to control others’, particularly when a given object is ‘“in” among the elites’.¹⁰⁹ Lady Blast’s manuscript is ‘in’, a fashionable, current mode of literary expression. It also commands status symbolically by destroying the reputation (or status) of its target and by exerting the influence of the writer’s goals over those of others. Brooke’s assertion that the writer’s goals are activated by envy is of interest here, since envy is typically seen as present in acts of possessing or desiring objects that are status-giving. Maria’s own history in London originated in the moment she saw the ‘superb carriage’ pass by and felt ‘the poison of ambition’ (5) awaken in her for the first time. Yet, by establishing parallels between Lady Blast’s manuscript and those of Maria, Brooke is able to demonstrate the different symbolic status of the works and the nature of Maria’s relationship to her possessions.

One of the ways in which this occurs is through the interplay of individual self-possession, represented by Maria’s works, and the eradication of individual distinctiveness through slander, discussed above. Another lies in the role played by Mr Hammond, who acts on Maria’s behalf on more than one occasion. Brooke uses him to elucidate the function of Maria’s tragedy by showing how an object can gain status by attracting the attention of people who already have status.¹¹⁰ Mr Hammond is noted by Mrs Merrick, with whom Maria lodges, to be ‘One of the sublimest poets, and most judicious critics, this enlightened age has produced’ (59). His favourable judgement of the tragedy confirms Maria’s belief in her play’s merit and increases its status. The approach to the theatre manager extends the procedure. Although this fails because he does not read it, the play’s intricate worth is not diminished. Brooke is instead able to focus on Mr Hammond’s mediatory role, an aspect she uses again when Mr Hammond ‘stand[s] forth [Maria’s] champion’ (131)

¹⁰⁹ *The Meaning of Things*, pp.29-31.

¹¹⁰ See *The Meaning of Things*, p.30 for a discussion of this point.

and intercedes to prevent the publication of Lady Blast's manuscript, which he forces her to burn. Referring to him also as 'a knight-errant' (133), Brooke uses the language of chivalry to describe the masculine protective role that Mr Hammond plays. But the language equally well suggests a mode of conduct that is archaic and, by this means, Brooke can convey a symbolic role for Mr Hammond of a more contemporary nature.

In standing between Maria and her (self-) possession, in the form of her tragedy, and Maria and her 'dispossession' in Lady Blast's manuscript, Mr Hammond can be said to mirror the male position in the domestic household, occupying the intermediary place between the economy and the supply of money and the woman's conversion of that money into domestic provision and household possessions. Furthermore, Maria's authorship effects a management over the site of domestic discourse – something Brooke had already explored in Mary Singleton's management of her periodical, *The Old Maid*, and which is also present in the correspondent's management of letters in the epistolary format – which figures the woman's management of the household in domestic economy.

Amanda Vickery, in an article 'Women and the World of Goods', offers a reading of women's relationship to household possessions, using the case study of Elizabeth Shackleton.¹¹¹ The records Elizabeth Shackleton kept indicate the role such possessions played 'in a range of social practices' and Vickery shows how 'well-chosen and well-maintained possessions testified to her expertise and gratified her self-esteem' in her role as household manager.¹¹² A distinction is made between these possessions and 'her *own* possessions',¹¹³ but as many commentators note, it is very difficult to say what the personal associations that gave objects particular

¹¹¹ Amanda Vickery, 'Women and the World of Goods: a Lancashire Consumer and her Possessions, 1751-81' in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, pp.274-301.

¹¹² Vickery in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, p.291.

¹¹³ Vickery, p.291.

meanings were. Lorna Weatherill, for example, in her article 'A Possession of One's Own', suggests that women's identity of interest with the well-being of the household invested possessions with particular importance, but also speculates on whether female economic self-sufficiency gave 'women the resources and independence to acquire what they wanted and to satisfy their own tastes when they became the heads of households'.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, Vickery argues that for Elizabeth Shackleton, 'the social and personal life of things *began* once they had been acquired and entered the household'.¹¹⁵

These possessions could thus have personal, social, cultural and sentimental meanings. They could also function as symbols of status. Yet we have to remember that, whereas the emphasis here is on the defining power of goods as objects of consumption, in the case of Maria's works, she relates to her possessions as they are objects of production. This is highly significant, for it allows Brooke to sustain through Maria's ownership of her products the capacity for economic agency, at the same time emphasizing the works as imaginative sites in which individual value is structured. We see this towards the end of the novel, when Maria adds to her resources, returning from London with a new piece of writing. Having at first decided against writing a narrative of her meeting with Lord Claremont, she later changes her mind. As the narrator wryly observes, 'she ran on in the high romance style the length of two quarto pages' (134). She sends the letter to Lord Melville, but owing to his absence from town, it cannot be delivered. Despite her grief at this final proof that Lord Melville has no intention of marrying her, Maria is acute enough to carefully preserve her account, being 'determined to insert [it] in her next novel' (136). Brooke shows her shrewdly managing her literary products, but also suggests how Maria commands her experiences, re-structuring Lord Claremont's

¹¹⁴ Lorna Weatherill, 'A Possession of One's Own: Women and Consumer Behavior in England, 1660-1740' in *Journal of British Studies*, Volume 25, 1986, pp.131-56. This reference, p.156

¹¹⁵ Vickery, p.282.

appropriation of her as an object of exchange, turning it to imaginative capital which she possesses in the form of her manuscript. In other words, she translates her appropriation into agency and does so in the form of domestic discourse – her next novel.

What Brooke seeks here is a specific way of depicting women in economic terms which allows them recognition as autonomous beings. Maria's imaginative command of domestic discourse indicates the existence of a self as an independent agent, and the objects that are the signs of that independence, in turn, support this self-determination.¹¹⁶ In her return to the domestic sphere at the end of *The Excursion*, Maria keeps with her the objects that express her agency, thus symbolically introducing female economic agency into the domestic economy of the household. Brooke commands the potential of these metaphorical layerings by employing one of her favourite devices, the sudden and unexpected accession to a large sum of money. Both Maria and her sister, Louisa, have made choices of appropriate marriage partners, when their guardian inherits an immense fortune. He promptly announces to his nieces: “I have more money than I know how to make use of myself: I therefore present each of you with twenty thousand pounds, and leave it to yourselves to bestow it as you please” (151). Brooke uses the device to accentuate female autonomy in managing these large sums of money. Yet she also wants to emphasize the important relationship between economic and personal autonomy within the domestic environment.

If, as we have seen, the personal economy forms and is formed by the cultural environment in relation to which an individual stands, then the effects of that culture and its ideals have to be taken into account when considering the degree of autonomy to which an individual can attain. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-

¹¹⁶ See *The Meaning of Things*, pp.139-40 for this point.

Halton point out, for example, that ‘It is only to the extent that a person *possesses* his or her own self and is not possessed by the external forms of mind, such as consumer culture [...], that free choice is possible’.¹¹⁷ What appear to be autonomous choices are in fact often replications of the culture, which therefore confirm the part of the seemingly autonomous self within it. Brooke’s aim throughout her work is to show how cultural ideals, specifically the domestic ideal, are structured to exert an imaginative imposition unless independently regulated by the individual. When Maria is at the height of her difficulties in London and the narrator laments ‘Why did she leave her household gods? Those household gods are alone the certain guardians of female honour’ (133), we have to remember, as Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton indicate, that in the past, ‘household gods’ operated as ‘symbols of attachment to widely shared cultural ideals’.¹¹⁸ It is only by testing such ideals, Brooke argues, and scrutinizing their metaphors of economy and value, that the sway of the household gods over domestic ideology can be met by claims for women’s personal independence and economic self-sufficiency.

¹¹⁷ *The Meaning of Things*, p.105.

¹¹⁸ *The Meaning of Things*, p.86.

Chapter Three

Obedience and Self-sufficiency in Eighteenth-Century Female Education and Conduct: Frances Sheridan's Sidney Bidulph Narratives

Frances Brooke's examination of women's economic capacity places emphasis, as we have seen, on a range of economic systems, not just the monetary. Brooke treats women's ability to manage these structures as intellectual, imaginative and practical evidence for sustaining a critique of domesticity and the kinds of female conduct that domesticity inscribes when it is expressed as a cultural ideal. She demonstrates female capacity to regulate value systems associated with a range of economies, representing these processes of regulation as the source of autonomous moral and economic ability.

However, in reading women writers such as Brooke for evidence of how the female sentimental novel modelled moral and economic self-sufficiency, the question arises of how women could develop this capacity for autonomous choice. Excluded from political power, economically dependent and constrained by masculine standards of morality, the odds were stacked against them. Furthermore, the education these women received was, by and large, limited in its scope and objectives. As noted in the previous chapter, Julia Mandeville was educated at home by her mother, since women's 'virtues blossom fairest in the vale', and is praised less for any intellectual attainments than because she is 'advancing in every charm'.¹ Female education placed emphasis on moral excellence and on producing wives who could run a household efficiently and could furnish their minds sufficiently to be suitable companions for their husbands. Yet, in promoting the

¹ *Lady Julia Mandeville*, p.185. This is a masculine appraisal, expressed by Colonel Mandeville

development of certain specified duties, virtues and practical and ornamental skills. female education also encouraged women to acquire sophisticated managerial abilities, including those of self-management, which look to be formulated in terms of independence and self-reliance. This raises a number of questions, including what exactly the objectives of female education were; how issues of dependence and independence were registered as part of its agenda; and whether we must now observe dual, if not competing, readings of self-sufficiency (what one might term an acceptable self-sufficiency, built around the management of a household economy and a highly developed sense of self-control, and a more challenging self-sufficiency by which women actively managed the resources of their education towards more autonomous ends): it is these questions that are the focus of this present chapter.

To introduce the type and range of works that will inform the following discussion of female education and self-sufficiency, I wish to begin by examining some terminology used throughout the previous chapter, namely ‘regulate’ and ‘regulation’. These terms were used to describe procedures by which the constituents of the different economic systems under consideration could be organized or mediated by the individual, or by the system itself, towards a sense of fitness or appropriate arrangement. Heinzelman’s identification of ‘economy’ as indicating human capacity for creating and imaginatively regulating intellectual structures illustrates this and modern dictionary definitions centre on ideas of controlling, directing or adjusting to requirements and bringing into conformity with a rule, principle or usage as current meanings.² Eighteenth-century dictionaries

² These definitions are based on entries in *Collins English Dictionary* and the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

offer similar definitions.³ The terms appear with remarkable frequency in works of female education, conduct literature and in novels concerned with education and conduct themes.

Mary Astell, in the late seventeenth century, advises women to remain unmarried unless they can meet with a man who ‘has duly regulated his own desires, since he is to have such an absolute Power over hers’, while Hannah More in the pastoral drama *The Search After Happiness* (1762), tells how ‘holy habits’ and ‘chastised desires’ ‘Should regulate disorder’d nature’s fires’. Throughout the eighteenth century, women were instructed how to ‘regulate all material points of conduct’ (Hester Chapone’s *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, 1773); and to practise the precepts that will ‘regulate the actions of your future life’ (Ann Murry, *Mentoria*, 1778). It is a lesson well-absorbed by the eponymous heroine of Frances Sheridan’s 1761 novel *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*, who observes, ‘I think we ought always to form some laws to ourselves for the regulation of our conduct’. However, Sidney’s words also suggest the importance in female instructional literature of self-regulation, which meant governing the heart, affections, temper and appetites. For the author of *The Polite Lady* (1760), for example, a consideration of the essential female virtues begins with temperance, which ‘consists in regulating all the bodily appetites, and keeping them within proper bounds’, while for Chapone, the ‘due Regulation of your Temper’ cannot begin ‘too early’. This distinctive moral framework at the same time encourages, exhorts – and

³ Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English Language*, 1755, gives the definition of ‘regulate’ as: 1. ‘To adjust by rule or method’ and 2. ‘To direct’; and ‘regulation’ as 1. ‘The act of regulating’ and 2. ‘Method; the effect of regulation’.

instructs – women to properly regulate their diversions, their reading, their expenses, their servants and their worldly affairs.⁴

To regulate, then, is a term applied to a wide range of practices that involve exercising appropriate control in governing and managing in accordance with expressed moral duties and ideals. Furthermore, if a woman could not regulate herself, neither could she succeed in fulfilling her domestic responsibilities as a wife and mother. Hannah More was to make this link explicit in her 1799 work *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, where she writes, ‘She who has the best regulated mind will, other things being equal, have the best regulated family’.⁵ She argues that this is the true end of education, for ‘The great uses of study to a woman are to enable her to regulate her own mind, and to be instrumental to the good of others’.⁶

Two things emerge here. Firstly, there is the question of whether the regulating women did was consistent across different economies; that is to say, whether the management of financial, household and personal economies required (or elicited) the same strategies of engagement in terms of practice and attitude. This will tell us something of how female education organized itself and how it operated in terms of direction and implementation. Secondly – and this is a question introduced in a preliminary formulation earlier – there is an issue of whether the processes of regulating and self-regulating become, within the discourse and

⁴ Works cited, in chronological order: Mary Astell, *Reflections upon Marriage* in *The First English Feminist*, edited by Bridget Hill, p. 104; Hannah More, *The Search After Happiness* in *The Miscellaneous Works*, Volume II, p.375; Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind in Female Education in the Age of Enlightenment*, p.88; Ann Murry, *Mentoria*, p.56; Frances Sheridan, *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*, p.27; ‘Portia’, *The Polite Lady*, p.172; Chapone, p.119; Diversions, Sarah Pennington, *An Unfortunate Mother’s Advice to her Absent Daughters*, pp.20-1; Reading, Chapone, p.187; Expenses, Pennington, p.78; Servants, Chapone, p.160. Full publication details follow first individual citations of these works.

⁵ Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, 1799, in *The Miscellaneous Works of Hannah More* in Two Volumes (London: Thomas Tegg, 1840), p.456.

⁶ More, *Strictures*, p.455.

practices of female education, the source of an agency that women could potentially harness in ways, and to ends, that were not intended, supplanting one form of self-sufficiency with another that was more autonomous, more provocative even.

In her study of the sentimental novel, Gillian Skinner finds one of the manifestations of this involvement to be what she describes as an emerging discourse of self-control.⁷ This tied frugality in economic practice to the female virtues of temperance, chastity and propriety, situating them domestically in order to affirm the moral restraint that countered sensibility's potential for excess. By the end of the eighteenth century, some sentimental writers (the more conservative ones) were describing this self-control in ways that differentiated between masculine and feminine forms of independence. Skinner's commentary on Jane West's 1798 novel *A Gossip's Story* identifies the nature of this 'acceptably feminised version of independence', which works by being directed inwards, becoming 'suitably internal', so that 'the principles it supports are the internally directed ones of fortitude and self-control, not externally directed ones such as pride in economic self-sufficiency'.⁸

Here, then, is one means by which we can consider how the question of female self-sufficiency could be discursively and strategically deployed in those forms which engaged with education and conduct issues. Another is suggested by Nancy Armstrong in *Desire and Domestic Fiction* where her exploration of the domestic woman shows how the ideal of domesticity, as represented in the conduct book and domestic fiction, 'established a private economy' whose organizational practices reflected those learnt techniques of self-regulation that marked a female education. Thus, Armstrong claims, 'self-regulation alone gave a woman authority

⁷ Gillian Skinner, *Sensibility and Economics in the Novel*, p.188.

⁸ Skinner, pp.166-69.

over the field of domestic objects and personnel where her supervision constituted a form of value in its own right'; indeed, 'self-regulation became a form of labor superior to labor' and the writing of its techniques in conduct literature 'aimed at nothing so clearly as producing gender-differentiated forms of economic behavior'.⁹

In order to examine these ideas and to place the concept of self-sufficiency within the context of instructional literatures, asking, in fact, whether self-sufficiency can be said to establish its own discourse as part of those literatures, the ultimate aim of this chapter is to offer a reading of Frances Sheridan's novel *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* and its sequel *Conclusion of the Memoirs*. A number of factors govern this choice of text. Sidney's occupation of a series of sexual and economic roles – eligible girl, wife, mother, widow, self-dependent gentlewoman – provides links with Frances Brooke's works in the previous chapter. Sidney's words, quoted above, of how 'we ought always to form some laws to ourselves for the regulation of our conduct' locates Sheridan's work within the concerns of female conduct and the moral economy those concerns structure. Sheridan's obfuscation of this moral economy through sustained strategies of ambiguity allows us to investigate the conformity-autonomy problematic in processes of (self-) regulation. This is reflected in the expression of a minutely described personal economy developed through the *Memoirs*' journal form whereby Sidney privately manages the tensions of her submission and dissent. Lastly, the theme of female education is represented in both works in particularly germane fashion, for, by making the mother-daughter dynamic the means of structuring the theme, Sheridan is able to present education as a moral concern textured by familial, relational values. The self-sufficiency of individual morality is thus tested

⁹ Armstrong, pp.81 and 89.

against family morality, a strategy that is made even more interesting by the generational span between the *Memoirs* and its sequel, which consolidates Sidney's transition from the daughter-pupil of her mother, Lady Bidulph, to mother-instructress to her own two daughters in their turn.

Before this, however, and in order to situate my reading of Sheridan's work more precisely, my discussion will cover three main areas that inform female education in the eighteenth century. The first is the nature of that education, its curriculum, methodology and practical management. The second concerns female conduct; for, while it is tempting to use the terms interchangeably due to their shared instructional agenda, conduct seems distinct from education in the sense that it derives its moral atmosphere from what the eighteenth century calls the virtues rather than the accomplishments.¹⁰ The third section will look at the idea of communities and requires, perhaps, a few more words of explanation.

In an earlier chapter, my discussion of Sarah Fielding's novel *The Governess* (1749) traced how the nine girls living as pupils at Mrs Teachum's boarding-school are able to transform themselves from an unseemly, contentious group into a 'well-regulated family'. The change is effected by each of the girls developing for herself a sufficiently aware moral sense to be self-reliant and to regulate her personal economy through shared acts of reading, interpretation and narration. The work's educational intent is to demonstrate the proper use of reading, but its promotion of individual responsibility shows 'how early young People might attain great Knowledge, if their Minds were free from foolish Anxieties about Trifles, and properly employed on their own Improvement' (125).

¹⁰ I am aware that the conduct books deal with both and frequently set down curricula – in some cases detailed time-tables – for a female education. My distinction is primarily an organizational strategy to enable me to present a socio-historical overview of eighteenth-century education separately from its internal dynamics.

By her use of the boarding-school setting and by emphasizing the evolution of the girls into a self-regulating group, Fielding places each girl's individual self-sufficiency in the context of the shared values of the community. Mary Cadogan, in her introduction to the novel, suggests that Fielding consciously 'exploited the heightened intensities of the all-girls-togetherness of boarding-school life' (vii) in order to make 'the essential point that in the entirely feminine setting of boarding school, girls *had* to become initiators' (viii). This shows that feminine, or feminized, communities can both structure modes of individual behaviour and be examined for evidence of how individual morality engages, coincides – or conflicts – with collective morality, which I have identified as a potential anomaly in educational agendas. At the same time, it is worth remembering that 'community' carries a range of meanings; not just concrete meanings of a community of people in societies, families, households, schools and so forth, but also of metaphorical registers, as in the community of ideas, ideals and values. Both aspects make the idea of communities consonant with an examination of education, whilst simultaneously leading us back to the concept of economies as value systems, which are regulated in specific ways; hence its inclusion as a formulative section in this discussion.

Female Education in the Eighteenth Century

Sarah Fielding's *The Governess* provides us with some preliminary insights into how women were educated in the eighteenth century. As an example of the type of girl's boarding-school that proliferated at the time, it is clearly meant to model something of an ideal. Mrs Teachum's decision to place educational

standards above profit was by no means reflected in reality and her practice of accepting ‘no more Scholars than she could have an Eye to herself’ (2) belongs to the processes of regulation and restraint that are to be encouraged in the nine girls that board there. These girls range in age from eight to fourteen and are instructed in ‘Reading, Writing, Working, and in all proper Forms of Behaviour’ (1). Lessons take place both in the morning and afternoon (except Saturdays), with a period of recreation in between. There is reference to a ‘Writing-Master’ (44) who comes in at specified times, but Mrs Teachum is responsible for most of the teaching herself. She also influences after-school activities when the girls are allowed to ‘divert themselves’ (3). In fact, it is what happens outside school hours, what the girls learn from shared reading and individual self-examination, that is the main focus of Fielding’s book. Whilst the boarding-school setting is an important framing device, *The Governess* ultimately presents only part of the educational picture represented by these schools, just as the boarding-school itself is only part of the scene of female education in the eighteenth century.

There were two principal environments for girls to receive an education in the eighteenth century – at school or at home. Schools could be day schools, charity schools or, as we have seen, boarding-schools, the last developing at a much commented upon rate from the seventeenth century onwards.¹¹ Of these types of school, charity schools (which could themselves be either day or boarding) made an education available to the poorest children. Founded as religious institutions – the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge alone established thousands of charity schools between the end of the seventeenth century and the mid-eighteenth century – they taught boys and girls sufficient reading skills to be able to follow the

¹¹ Rosemary O’Day, *Education and Society 1500-1800: The Social Foundations of Education in Early Modern Britain* (London: Longman, 1982), p.186.

Scriptures. Some basic writing and arithmetic might also be taught, but the principal aim of these schools was to prepare pupils for domestic service. For girls, this meant learning practical skills, particularly needlework; ‘a large proportion of handicraft to a very little book-learning’, as Dorothy Gardiner puts it.¹² Olwen Hufton in *The Prospect Before Her* notes it also meant acquiring the proper demeanour and comportment, presenting ‘sober, industrious, thrifty, obedient, competent women who appeared clean and neat and made the right impression’. In this way, the charity schools had their own moral and economic ideal of womanhood; namely, the ideal maidservant.¹³

Whilst the charity schools pursued a clear educational purpose, day schools, including village schools, dame schools and private day schools, varied widely in what they offered their pupils. They were cheap – Josephine Kamm suggests ‘a few pence a week’ – and were attended by the children of working families, who could manage the small charge but were by no stretch of the imagination wealthy.¹⁴ The sort of education girls received at this type of school sounds similar to the curriculum of charity schools: reading, writing and arithmetic, though often at a very rudimentary level, religious knowledge and needlecraft skills such as sewing, knitting and spinning. Hufton points out that, in some cases, the purpose of the dame schools ‘was more to keep children safely out of the way of working parents than to impart knowledge’.¹⁵ Nevertheless, girls generally acquired some literacy and practical skills, and, in a motif that runs through all degrees of women’s education in this period, these skills were clearly directed towards their future roles

¹² Dorothy Gardiner, *English Girlhood at School: A Study of Women’s Education Through Twelve Centuries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), p.313.

¹³ Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe*, Volume One, 1500-1800 (London: Harper Collins, 1995), p.83.

¹⁴ Josephine Kamm, *Hope Deferred: Girls’ Education in English History* (London: Methuen & Co., 1965), p.83.

¹⁵ Hufton, p.171.

in life. For the girls who attended day schools, this most likely meant some form of work or trade, and the education they received, whatever its scope, must have derived a moral tone from this circumstance.

Boarding-schools and academies also directed themselves to preparing women for their future life roles. Essentially, this meant marriage. It is implicit in *The Governess*, for example, that Mrs Teachum's pupils are being groomed to become good wives and mothers. They are also representative of the girls the boarding-schools attracted, that is the 'daughters of the well-to-do middle classes, the professional classes and the gentry'.¹⁶ A boarding-school education represented a form of investment by parents in these daughters and it was expected that a return on the investment would be reflected in what the girls were taught by way of preparing them for marriage. This encompassed the necessary skills for effective domestic management, but also a range of ornamental skills or accomplishments, which would heighten the girls' attractiveness to potential husbands. Thus, Janet Todd cites a 'pretty standard' curriculum for an eighteenth-century boarding-school, 'with English, French, music, dancing, writing and accounts commonly being taught, and an emphasis laid on deportment and fancy needlework'.¹⁷ In a 1760 book, *The Polite Lady*, 'Portia' writes a series of letters to her daughter Sophia, which provides a thorough commentary on Sophia's education as a pupil at 'Mrs B.-'s boarding-school'.¹⁸ The first topic addressed is needlework, followed by letters on reading, writing and ciphering. Other subjects covered are dancing, drawing, music, French and geography. The majority of the letters, however, are concerned with conduct rather than curriculum and Portia's avowed aim is to

¹⁶ O'Day, p.191.

¹⁷ Janet Todd, Introduction to *Female Education in the Age of Enlightenment*, Volume 1 (London: William Pickering, 1996), p.xv.

¹⁸ 'Portia', *The Polite Lady, or a Course of Female Education in a Series of Letters from a Mother to her Daughter* (London: A. Millar, 1760), p.1. All further references are cited in the text.

establish a model of ‘a polite and accomplished lady’ (vii). There is an echo of this in Marjorie Reeves’ recent findings from her examination of newspaper advertisements for boarding-schools in the Salisbury area in the early- and mid-eighteenth century, which show moral care to be their primary concern. She notes how ‘Most advertisements emphasize strict attention to morals’, but treat the quality of the education itself ‘more cavalierly’.¹⁹ Clearly, Sophia’s boarding-school education, in terms of both curriculum and moral care, is intended to be exemplary; but boarding-schools themselves were often the focus of fierce debate.

As Reeves’ words suggest, one aspect of the debate centred on the quality of education and teaching at the boarding-schools. Another questioned just how strict the averred ‘strict attention to morals’ was in practice. While Dorothy Gardiner sums this up when she writes how boarding-schools ‘were neither universally approved nor highly esteemed; their standards generally speaking were inferior, the influence they exercised on character negligible where not actually corrupting’, a late eighteenth-century voice, Mary Wollstonecraft’s in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, spoke out forcibly ‘on the bad habits which females acquire when they are shut up together’ in schools.²⁰ However, P. J. Miller argues that the problem was essentially a social one, that boarding-schools made it possible for a large number of girls to receive ‘an education to which their rank did not entitle them’.²¹

J. H. Plumb has shown how ‘economic opportunity’ and ‘social mobility’, together with a heightened impetus to social emulation and a whole new set of

¹⁹ Marjorie Reeves, *Pursuing the Muses: Female Education and Nonconformist Culture, 1700-1900* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), p.18.

²⁰ Gardiner, p.333. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1792, in *Political Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.249.

²¹ P. J. Miller, ‘Women’s Education, “Self-Improvement” and Social Mobility – A Late Eighteenth Century Debate’ in *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 20, 1972, pp.302-314. This reference p.303.

attitudes, affected the education of children in the eighteenth century.²² Part of this was the greater investment in daughters mentioned above. The quest for fashionable education filled the boarding-schools with the daughters of ‘innkeepers, shopkeepers, craftsmen, farmers and even servants’.²³ This located anxieties, not only concerning the probity and purposes of such schools, but also the nature and desirability of female education as a whole. Some of the other elements in this debate will emerge below, but, first, this section considers the question of female education in the home environment and how this was distinct from (or informed by) the types of school education available.

There is a sense, of course, in which all girls were educated at home, for education does not just mean acquiring literacy skills and accomplishments. As Rosemary O’Day observes, ‘All girls [...] might learn what they needed for their future life at their mother’s knee – sewing, cooking, medicine, all manner of housewifery, accounting and, in the case of the lower classes, certain agricultural skills’.²⁴ With female illiteracy widespread and most girls receiving no formal education or schooling, the home and the figure of the mother thus became the chief sources of instruction and skill-imparting. For girls of the middling rank and upwards, however, the concept of being educated at home would have meant something more than this. Their education would have contained more formal instruction in the provision of organized lessons, with either a mother or a governess as teacher.

The daughters of the upper ranks and nobility, unless sent to highly exclusive boarding-schools, were invariably educated at home by governesses,

²² J. H. Plumb, ‘The New World of Children in Eighteenth-Century England’ in *Past and Present*, Number 67, May 1975, pp.64-93. This reference p.70.

²³ Miller, p.307.

²⁴ O’Day, p.183.

supplemented by specialist masters in subjects like dancing, drawing and modern languages. Expenditure on home education was a mark of status and the continuity in environment must have worked to steep girls in the very ideology of domestic life for which they were being educated. A 1778 book, *Mentoria: or, The Young Ladies' Instructor* by Ann Murry, gives an impression of what an ideal version of this kind of education might have been like. Presented in the form of dialogues between a governess, the eponymous Mentoria, and her two pupils, Lady Mary and Lady Louisa (later joined by their brother Lord George, who is home on holiday from Harrow School), the book is 'Calculated to improve Young Minds in the Essential, as well as Ornamental Parts of Female Education'.²⁵ This education is familiar in the subjects it covers – orthography, grammar, geography, history, basic mathematics, for example – but what distinguishes the book is its enactment of Mentoria's role as moral guide and overseer of appropriate female conduct. Each day's lesson takes a particular subject or theme and proceeds by a mixture of instruction, discussion and question and answer. The questions, however, are invariably asked by the pupils as they seek further explanation or clarification on important points, and demonstrate their increasing understanding and self-awareness of the precepts in which, and by which, they are being instructed. Mentoria is never lost for an answer and the pupils are responsive to this moral certainty, as they are to her pointing out 'those as a model who excel' (7). She herself is clearly intended as exemplary: her learning, she tells them, came 'by industry and observation' and she has 'read a great deal' (81). Furthermore, she has always known her duty and this is evident in the competence and conscientiousness she displays in her role as mentor. This last emerges in the book's tonal

²⁵ Ann Murry, *Mentoria: or, The Young Ladies' Instructor* (London: J. Fry & Co., 1778), title page. Further references are cited in the text.

atmosphere. Mentoria is respectful towards her pupils and implicitly elicits their respect and obedience in response. An innate moral authority operates here. Lady Mary calls her 'my good Mentoria' and the girls are always expressively grateful for her 'kind instructions' (48).

This ideal of home education is unlikely to have been widespread in reality. One reason for this was the variable quality of governesses. If the debate on boarding-schools was partly focused on the fact that pupils from inferior ranks were gaining access to a fashionable education, then there was a cross-over to home education when numbers of these pupils began to seek positions as governesses. The territory of the debate becomes further shared because, as Miller shows, 'the *nouveaux riches*', attracted by the idea of 'a domestic governess' to proclaim their affluence and emulate their social superiors, often went for 'the cheapest governess available'.²⁶ A home education for girls was frequently beset by complex issues. Of the writers in this study, Sarah Fielding relied on contacts from her domestic circle of friends to complement her education from a Salisbury boarding-school, while Frances Sheridan had to go behind her father's back to receive any sort of instruction. It is perhaps no coincidence that both women lost their mothers early. As we have seen, the mother's role in female education was pivotal and their influence in the home environment a subject of increasing focus during the eighteenth century.

Olwen Hufton in *The Prospect Before Her* shows how 'Above all, mothers taught their children about the process of survival in their particular world and their particular social class'. The mother was the first teacher, her role was 'part of a shaping process, acculturation', a central influence in 'inculcating a notion of

²⁶ Miller, p.309.

gender roles into her daughter.’ Her ‘ultimate job was to advance or maximize her daughter’s marital prospects, whatever these might be’.²⁷ As Lady Mary Wortley Montagu wrote to her daughter in 1753, ‘The ultimate end of your Education was to make you a good Wife’. When she adds, ‘and I have the comfort to hear you are one’, one senses her satisfaction at a job well done.²⁸ The mother-daughter relationship was critical, not only to the notion of an appropriate educational curriculum, but also to the broader procedure of the moral, social and cultural shaping of women. It is not surprising, therefore, that it was a theme taken up and probed by women writers of the time. Frances Brooke, as we have seen, examined the home education of Lady Julia Mandeville by her mother, Lady Belmont. This is compared with Mrs Westbrook’s neglect of her daughter’s education, a care she is too lazy to undertake. Sarah Fielding’s Ophelia is educated in a rural self-sufficiency by her aunt (and mother-figure), an education strictly monitored and selective, while in Sheridan’s novel, Sidney Bidulph, again in the country, is educated by her mother, Lady Bidulph, ‘in the strictest principles of virtue’.²⁹

But it is quickly noticeable that in none of these examples is the mother’s influence considered a complete success. This can be linked to a wider concern amongst some educational theorists and commentators that mothers had to be properly instructed for their role as educators. Even where they did not take direct charge of their children’s education, it was part of a woman’s domestic duties to engage and oversee nurserymaids and governesses, supervisory functions for which

²⁷ Hufton, pp.210, 211 and 216 respectively.

²⁸ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Selected Letters*, edited and introduced by Isobel Grundy (London: Penguin, 1997), p.381.

²⁹ Frances Sheridan, *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*, edited by Patricia Koster and Jean Coates Cleary (Oxford: Oxford University Press (World’s Classics), 1995), p.11. All further references are cited in the text.

they required due preparation.³⁰ John Locke, for example, in advocating a home over a public education, saw that women needed to be educated appropriately for the responsibilities of this role. A century later, in a rhetorical move that reflects the privileging of the domestic woman, Hannah More exhorts mothers that ‘On YOU depend in no small degree the principles of the whole rising generation’. In a flourish that simultaneously valorizes women’s educative role, she reminds them how ‘Your private exertions may at this moment be contributing to the future happiness, your domestic neglect to the future ruin, of your country’.³¹ Mary Wollstonecraft, meanwhile, points out that although ‘Mankind seem to agree that children should be left under the management of women during their childhood’, that same ‘Mankind’ denies women the rational education they need to carry this out effectively. She continues, ‘unless the understanding of woman be enlarged, and her character rendered more firm, by being allowed to govern her own conduct, she will never have sufficient sense or command of temper to manage her children properly’.³² Thus, education for women becomes a matter of collective social responsibility.

We return here to the diversity of attitudes towards female education in the eighteenth century. The questions of where and how women should be educated, what they should be taught, what they should be educated *for* (and, for that matter, whether they should be educated *at all*) produced a wide range of debate and comment. As we have seen, in one sense all women received an education, although this did not necessarily include any formal schooling. For those who did go to school or who had a domestic governess, there was a correlation between social

³⁰ The other side of this argument was that women did not need educating in what should be considered an instinctual role. See Jane Roland Martin, *Reclaiming a Conversation: The Ideal of the Educated Woman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p.93.

³¹ More, *Strictures*, p.380

³² Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, pp.139 and 234 respectively.

rank and the quality and scope of the education they received. There was also a correlation between that education and the roles girls were being prepared to fulfil, be it domestic service, trade, vocation or elite marriage. However, there is another important figure in female education, who realigns questions of what women should be educated *for* and introduces anew some of the ideas with which this chapter is concerned. This is the 'learned lady', whose intellectual attainments went beyond what many people considered suitable for her sex and a brief examination of whom will allow us to reconsider the presence of both containment and autonomy in female education.

Janet Todd points out that there have always been women renowned for their scholarship and intellectual ability. Attitudes to them have varied, but in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries 'they were always exceptions, and they were regarded more or less as freaks'.³³ Strategies of containment focused on mockery and satiric exposure of female pedantry, or voiced charges of gender-flouting.³⁴ As we have seen, women's education did not include the academic content of masculine education and efforts by women to learn such subjects as Latin or Greek were regarded as encroaching on male preserves. The concern, in essence, was that women might intellectually emancipate themselves from their submissive, obedient role in domestic life. Mary Astell addressed this in her *Reflections upon Marriage*, writing 'some sage Persons may perhaps object, that were Women allow'd to Improve themselves, and not [be] driven back by those wise Jests and Scoffs that are put upon a Woman of Sense or Learning, a Philosophical Lady as she is call'd

³³ Todd, Introduction to *Female Education in the Age of Enlightenment*, Volume 1, p.xi.

³⁴ For a useful survey of satiric representations of the learned lady see Myra Reynolds, *The Learned Lady in England, 1650-1760* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1920), which includes a chapter on this topic.

by way of Ridicule, they would be too Wise and too Good for the Men'.³⁵ Her argument, pre-empting Wollstonecraft, is that improvement through learning is a human, not a gendered, responsibility and that allowing women a more rigorous intellectual training will benefit society at large.

The question of what it was proper for a lady to know runs throughout eighteenth-century instructional literatures. For many women commentators, the avocation of female education was accompanied by a careful acknowledgement of prevailing strictures. Sarah Pennington records, in 1761, that 'It has been objected against all Female Learning, beyond that of Houshold Oeconomy, that it tends only to fill the Minds of the Sex with a conceited Vanity, which sets them above their proper Business'.³⁶ She uses this generalization to impress on her daughters the importance of learning efficient domestic management, without which a woman will be exposed to ridicule 'whatever may be her Attainments in any other kinds of Knowledge' (27-28). To this end, basic arithmetic is required, but 'more you can never have Occasion for' (25). Mentoria argues similarly that the first four rules of mathematics are vital 'to regulate your affairs' (172), but geometry 'is not a part of female education' (174). In some cases, a more concerted response is made to restrictions on female learning. In *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, Hester Chapone examines the case for a woman's acquiring 'the learned languages', concluding that 'The labour and time which they require are generally incompatible with our natures and proper employments'.³⁷ Worse than this for Chapone is the danger of 'pedantry and presumption', a point which Hannah More also identified

³⁵ Mary Astell, *Reflections Upon Marriage*, Third Edition (1706) in Bridget Hill, *The First English Feminist: Reflections Upon Marriage and Other Writings* (Aldershot: Gower/Maurice Temple Smith, 1986), p.129.

³⁶ Sarah Pennington, *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to Her Absent Daughters* (London: S. Chandler, 1761), p.26. All further references are cited in the text.

³⁷ Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, 1773, in *Female Education in the Age of Enlightenment*, Volume 2, p.190. All further references are cited in the text.

in her drama *The Search After Happiness*, where Cleora, impelled by vanity, ‘seized on learning’s superficial part’, forgot ‘The daily duties of my life’ and seeking ever ‘Abstruser studies’, desired only ‘That all might know how much Cleora knew’.³⁸

Thus, anxieties surrounding the idea of the learned lady found their way into many books of education and conduct. Domestic excellence, private resourcefulness, even independent and judicious exercising of the mind were desirable; intellectual precocity was not. Hester Chapone admits to being frightened by the idea ‘of seeing my girl remarkable for learning’ (191). Yet, at the same time, she can express respect for ‘the abilities and application of those ladies, who have attained [the learned languages]’ (190). Thus, not all attitudes to learned women were negative and for some girls the desire for the life of the mind transcended cultural disapproval. In general, they needed sympathetic male figures about them to achieve this. Reeves notes that ‘to a large extent the real education of intellectual young women was fostered by the men in their social environment’.³⁹ Myers similarly indicates the importance of ‘male mentors’ to ‘most English women who turned to intellectual life’.⁴⁰ Yet just as instructional literature posits an ideal of the ‘proper’ lady, it is possible to discern in the above a notion of the ‘proper’ *learned* lady. Indeed, Chapone’s words suggest this, qualifying her respect for ladies who acquire the learned languages, quoted above, with the proviso that they ‘make a modest and proper use of them’ (190). Furthermore, Myers shows how modesty and self-abnegation went hand-in-hand with female learning and how the women who

³⁸ Hannah More, *The Search After Happiness*, A Pastoral Drama for Young Ladies, 1762, in *The Miscellaneous Works of Hannah More*, Volume II, pp.360-383. This reference p.369. Urania points out that ‘The privilege of man she dares invade’ instead of recognizing that women have their own ‘proper sphere’, pp.378-79.

³⁹ Reeves, p.19.

⁴⁰ Sylvia Harcstark Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), p.16.

followed intellectual pursuits still ‘internalized society’s injunctions against learned ladies’.⁴¹

Female education, then, was gendered to produce women who were not only prepared for their future life roles, but who were trained to perceive this preparation and these roles in specific ways. For women of the upper-middle ranks the agenda is clear – to preserve the sanctity and integrity of domestic life by becoming competent, obedient, self-reliant, properly accomplished (but not overly learned), dutiful wives and mothers. However, we might question how, in Linda Pollock’s words, this ‘dual role of subordination and competence’ worked in practice; how, paradoxically, women, ‘socialized to be demure, compliant and submissive’, could also prove such astute and successful managers of estates and businesses.⁴²

Rejecting as too limited a solution that posits a ‘restrictive ideology’ but ‘permissive reality’, Pollock uses concepts of femininity and masculinity to show that early modern society educated its women to be deferential to men and to feel their own inferiority, at the same time positing that education as protracted and challenging in order that women would feel a sense of achievement in attaining its goals and ideals. Women could thus acknowledge their inferiority without perceiving themselves to be inadequate; could accept a subordinate position without jettisoning a capacity for independent thought and action. Pollock suggests that women, in fact, were reared to show ‘selective deference and subordination’ and that, as adults, they ‘switched between roles’, that is, between when to comply and when to act independently, ‘choosing according to the circumstances’.⁴³

⁴¹ Myers, pp.155-6.

⁴² Linda Pollock ‘“Teach her to live under obedience”: the making of women in the upper ranks of early modern England’, *Continuity and Change*, Volume 4, 1989, pp.231-258. This reference p.231.

⁴³ Pollock, pp.246 and 250.

There is support for Pollock's findings in Olwen Hufton's observation that, in their educative role, mothers tried to produce daughters 'as near as possible to the model stated in the prescriptive literature but one possessing enough *savoir-faire* to negotiate the system'.⁴⁴ However, all this gives rise to a further paradox, one that is positional, for, in both these formulations, women hold simultaneous positions both within and outside of systems: an internal position within the system of which they are a product, through education, and to whose strictures, even if pragmatically, they consent; and an external position as the managers of systems, which they either 'negotiate' (Hufton) or in relation to which they choose roles 'according to the circumstances' (Pollock), suggesting acts of alternating consent and refusal.

We saw in the previous chapter how the female manipulation of consent and refusal, there associated with the figure of the coquette but also generating a discrete agency, could operate in the form of self-determination within an autonomous space beyond the oppositions. Here, we are reminded of the role of the personal economy in discriminating between independently-regulated and culturally-authorized systems. Furthermore, if we consider education as a resource – or a collection of resources – with an identifiable range of associated values, we are able to locate education within the practices of economic discourse, whether moral or political, in which the personal economy is again implicated, not least in terms of the strategies women employed to manage those resources. As women learned to be good economists (of the self, the household), they also acquired the skills to privately regulate their managerial status to potentially autonomous ends. In this way, what Pollock identifies as a conflation of independent and culturally-authorized practices could, in fact, represent a disguised space for determining the

⁴⁴ Hufton, p.216.

scope of individual morality against collective morality. As I will show, I believe these ideas are amongst those Frances Sheridan sought to explore in her Sidney Bidulph narratives.

Nevertheless, as we have seen, female education was organized towards highly specific ends and it remains necessary to enquire how it regulated itself to counter what it designated unsuitable or unauthorized forms of behaviour. One way of addressing this question is to pursue the economy analogy by looking at the nature of the moral economy framed within instructional literature aimed at women. More particularly, we might consider how women were instructed to exercise the appropriate (self-) control in accordance with expressed moral ideals and duties. This will allow us to examine how the concept – or discourse – of self-control operated as a site where moral and personal economies could engage.

Eighteenth-Century Conduct Books for Women

Conduct books formed a substantial body of material within the sum of eighteenth-century instructional literature: Shoemaker has suggested that ‘at least 500 separate editions [were] published between 1693 and 1760 alone’.⁴⁵ Those aimed at women of the middling and upper-middling sorts offered guidance, both moral and practical, in how to behave pre- and post-marriage. An emphasis on chastity, piety, modesty and frugality characterizes what Vivien Jones has described as conduct literature’s ‘bourgeois programme of self-discipline and self-improvement’ which works to counter ‘aristocratic sexual licence and consumerist

⁴⁵ Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850*, p.21. This figure includes books for both sexes.

excess'.⁴⁶ Many of the conduct books also take seriously the question of female education (and continuing self-education), some pursuing a chapter-by-chapter commentary on appropriate curriculum topics, others proposing a complete educational plan – and how to divide up the day in order to accommodate it; whilst others again contain book lists and extensive analysis of suitably improving reading matter.

Although it is tempting to describe these repeated patterns of topics and the apparent moral consensus with which they are dealt as evidence of a generic sameness, the conduct books' 'community' of ideals and values is in fact open to subtly nuanced readings. This in part derives from the range of forms in which they were written, including letters, sermons and dialogues, and to the fact that many were addressed to particular individuals, identified by name (real or pseudonymous) or defined by relationship, primarily nieces and daughters. The intimacy established by these techniques is suitable for the imparting of moral advice, but it also allows us to consider how the processes of initiating individuals into what was deemed the collective morality worked in practice.

A preliminary, and somewhat crude, distinction can be made by looking at differences between male- and female-authored books, which vary in their attitudes to the feminine ideal. At the simplest level, this could turn on a linguistic register, beginning, in male authored books, with allusions to 'the fair sex' and building to an at times hyperbolic vocabulary of attitudes referring to women's softness, docility and personal charms. This rhetorical strategy elevated a woman's 'natural' (and distinctively female) qualities and worked to endow her with a moral superiority, which served to socialize men and, hence, benefit society as a whole.

⁴⁶ Vivien Jones, 'The Seductions of Conduct: Pleasure and Conduct Literature' in *Pleasure in the Eighteenth-Century*, edited by Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), pp.108-132. This reference p.108.

Thomas Marriott, who authored (in rhyming couplets) the 1759 conduct book, *Female Conduct: Being an Essay on the Art of Pleasing* was not alone in expressing female morality in national terms, averring ‘how Nations owe/ To Female Kind, their Welfare, and their Woe’.⁴⁷ What is most striking about Marriott’s book, however, is its mixture of tonal effects, which sit uncomfortably around the female figure the book constructs. Addressing himself to ‘Plautilla’, Marriott pledges to help her ‘learn the Art, our Sex to please’, in order that she may ‘gain a Husband’.⁴⁸ Yet, although women may have it ‘in their Power, by their exemplary Behavior, to render Virtue fashionable, and discountenance Vice among the Men’, they also have to be evoked as ‘those fair Creatures, on whom indulgent Nature has so profusely poured such various Graces’.⁴⁹

Here we see represented the two sides of the coin delineating female moral superiority, a position whose tensions are further revealed, not only in Marriott’s advice to every wife to couple the use of physical charms with compliance in order to sway her husband, but also in the tonal clashes inherent in his guidance that women first snare, then cage their lovers by flattery and subterfuge. This quasi-misogynistic attitude seems like a throwback to the seventeenth-century shift in the ideological construction of gender noted by Todd, by which women shed their responsibility for the Fall to become superior moral agents.⁵⁰ It also reminds one of James Fordyce’s later work, *Sermons to Young Women* (1766), in which sentimental effusion triggered by ideal femininity sits uneasily with the hectoring tone of relentlessly consecutive rhetorical questions. A more curious example is presented by a 1743 volume, *The Conduct of a Married Life*, of which I will be

⁴⁷ Thomas Marriott, *Female Conduct: Being an Essay on the Art of Pleasing* (London: W. Owen, 1759), p.105. Hannah More was to make a similar point, as indicated earlier in the chapter.

⁴⁸ Marriott, p.16.

⁴⁹ Marriott, Preface, pp.xxvii-viii and xix respectively.

⁵⁰ Todd, p.xiii.

saying more later, whose male author (by no means uniquely) adopted a female pseudonym and identity thereby entering into the text by means of a first person pronoun, singular and collective, which functioned as a masculine rhetorical device.

Thus, in certain male-authored conduct books, the promulgation of a sustained ideology is often accompanied by the construction of the ideal woman as a rhetorical object. The moral economy this structures is characterized by atmosphere as much as, if not more than, by substance and serves to validate Janet Todd's caveat that 'the ideological notion of women presented in conduct-book literature was never a mirror-image of real life'. Todd goes on to suggest that women 'eager to please men and find husbands', themselves produced conduct books written with 'divided voices', as they mimicked the male-authorized cultural ideal whilst 'sometimes struggling with their own experience'.⁵¹ Certainly, it is noticeable that female-authored books of conduct often establish a more pragmatic, less effusive, sense of the 'ideal woman' and that the moral economy *this* approach structures is accordingly more rooted in substance. In this way, the self-regulation and restraint women were called on to practise found its way into the linguistic texture of the books they authored and, by countering men's less restrained, more rapturous evocation of the female and the feminine, allowed the simultaneous enactment of a process of converting masculine-authorized female moral superiority into the pragmatics of responsibility. At the same time, a reluctance to endorse advice such as Marriott's concerning the snaring of lovers suggests there were elements of male-authorized female conduct that women chose not to adopt in their own moral agenda. This is not to suggest a reading of female-authored conduct books as a site of resistance, but rather gives scope to a more nuanced approach to

⁵¹Todd, p.vii.

female experience than Todd's words, quoted above, encompass. It is important to remember here that many conduct books were written by mothers, addressed to their daughters, a relationship which as we have seen, was crucial in guiding and shaping girls to the requisite ends. This was not just a privileging of experience over inexperience, but a privileging of experience in its own right and we can expect it to affect how women inscribed the collective practices in which they wished to inculcate the individuated 'pupils' they addressed.

In many ways, Sarah Pennington's *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to Her Absent Daughters*, first published in 1761, is typical in content and atmosphere of female-authored conduct books of its time. Written in the form of a letter, which both individualizes and makes intimate its mode of address, it offers advice and precepts intended to compliment 'a polite Education' (11) by establishing the significance to women of observing religious duty, practising self-discipline in mental and physical activity, assuming the demands of domestic responsibility and demonstrating a socialized feminine piety through acts of benevolence and charity. It also deliberates on curriculum topics, appropriate reading and conscious self-improvement. Yet, whilst these themes and modes occur elsewhere in conduct literature, Pennington's work is remarkable for how circumstance has contextualized the mother-daughter relationship.

As the title suggests, Pennington's marital estrangement (apparently due to imprudence rather than any criminal activity) imbues the 'letter' with a more than physical sense of absence: it involves a psychic disruption in the moral continuum of proximity and supervision which expresses the mother's educational role.⁵² By designating herself the 'Unfortunate Mother', Pennington conveys a dual

⁵² See Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) for biographical information on Pennington.

consciousness of being wrongfully accused *and* deprived of her culturally-authorized role. Her determination to reclaim the latter emerges in the book's opening lines where she writes that failure to give her daughters her maternal advice 'would, I think, be the Breach of an indispensable Duty' (1). This is underlined by her establishing an alternative continuum whereby she frames the book with remarks on her present position and a vindication of her conduct, which asserts its private discipline over public indiscretion. The resulting effect is to situate her avowed aim to pass on 'Advice with regard to your Conduct in Life' in the context of her need to 'supply the Deprivation of a constant tender maternal Care' (9-10), a factor which draws attention to how the conveyance of conduct advice characterizes female experience and self-control located in the figure of the instructing mother.

Pennington's advice is, in the first place, intended to be practical. Her emphasis on the importance of religious instruction and 'Duty to God' as 'ever the first and principal Object of your Care' (12) is coupled with instruction in how to pray and in the effective 'use' of church services and sermons. Her advice on the value of self-improvement is accompanied by practical guidance in time management. Above all, her remarks on the 'Management of all Domestic Affairs' as 'the proper Business of Woman' (27) stress the task-based nature of the role, including to govern servants and 'to order an elegant Table with Oeconomy' (27); whilst the 'perfect Knowledge of every Branch of Houshold Oeconomy' which is 'absolutely necessary' for discharging these 'Domestic Duties' only attains its ideal ends when making 'yourself Mistress of the Theory' is seen as the preliminary to being 'able, the more readily, to reduce it into Practice' (36-37).

We can see here an echo of Linda Pollock's formulation of how women were instructed to be both competent and subordinate, for Pennington's advice is

concerned not only with what it is 'proper' for a woman to know and to do, but with her knowing it and doing it to the best of her ability. The practical responsibilities of this are expressed simultaneously as self-regulation and domestic regulation. This being so, it is interesting to consider whether the management of the self and of the household were equated; whether, for example, governing servants was regarded in the same way as governing the self, or ordering an elegant table 'with Oeconomy' was the equivalent of, say, observing elegance and 'Decency' in dress. Pennington's work shows that the effect is *in part due, first*, to the shared application of vocabulary and, secondly, to an emphasis on practical guidance in a set of procedures whose desirability was widely recognized and consequently encoded. Thus, when Pennington's focus turns from the 'Business' of 'Houshold Oeconomy' to the more personal consideration of 'the Choice of a Companion for Life' (51), the guidance she gives on how to live with an uncongenial husband, namely 'patient Submission' (63) and 'an absolute Command over the Passions' (65), is an articulation of self-control which posits duty over, rather than towards, self and which belongs with the domestic practices she addresses earlier. Nevertheless, we need to remind ourselves here of the circumstances in which Pennington's book was written.

Removed from the household environment and 'discharged' from her domestic responsibilities, Pennington's writing from outside the authorized bounds textures her experience and self-control in ways that appear to compromise them, especially as she admits her public conduct to have been that of 'the most finished Coquet' (4). Yet her inclusion of a narrative of personal experience to frame the advice she tenders imbues her precepts with a programme of self-defence. Thus, her guidance on how to live with an uncongenial man allows the resonance of personal

experience to demonstrate the very self-discipline and restraint which the conduct book agenda requires her to dispense. The highly personalized nature of *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to Her Absent Daughters* shows how an approved programme of instruction for girls can check the presence of unauthorized behaviour whilst enacting the psychological complexities of the individual's encounter with the programme's ideals.

Hester Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773), which consists of ten letters addressed to a favourite niece (aged fourteen), begins, as Pennington's work does, by emphasizing the importance of a rational education founded on religious principle. A recognizable palette of verbs – 'correct', 'purify', 'form', 'govern', 'subdue' – invokes anew the concept of disciplined self-control. The first three letters concentrate on religious topics, the next three on the 'Regulation of the Heart and Affections' and the 'Government of the Temper', and the remaining four on 'Oeconomy', 'Accomplishments' and curriculum topics. As with Pennington, the advice relates to preparation for, and conduct within, marriage. Letter VII, 'On Oeconomy', presents one example of how self-control, personal happiness and cultural responsibility conflate in the duties of the married woman, asserting that:

Oeconomy is so important a part of a woman's character, so necessary to her own happiness, and so essential to her performing properly the duties of a wife and of a mother, that it ought to have the precedence of all other accomplishments, and take its rank next to the first duties of life.(147)

Chapone stipulates 'oeconomy' to be an 'art' as well as a 'virtue' (147) and urges a thorough preparation in all its branches by careful observation and performing trial tasks in the parental home. Like Pennington, Chapone decries idleness, calls for 'a good disposition of time' (156), equates the elegance and propriety of the table with

dress (155), lays stress on the ‘proper regulation of servants’ (160) and makes the ‘prudent distribution of your charitable gifts’ a significant ‘branch of Oeconomy’ (170). Again we might ask whether the conduct book discourse of self-control constructs the management of the personal economy as it does the domestic economy.

In her work on conduct books, Nancy Armstrong argues that the virtues and qualities of the desirable woman ‘described the objectives of an educational program in terms that spelled out a coherent set of economic policies for the management of the household’.⁵³ The domestic woman *embodied* moral norms derived from the procedures of self-regulation, which Armstrong formulates as a new form of labour (or ‘Labor That is Not Labor’) mapped out by the conduct books’ shifting of power from the aristocratic body to the domestic woman’s qualities of mind and their representing of the new category of labour as ‘the power to turn behavior into psychological events’.⁵⁴ Armstrong’s generic readings push her thesis through with great momentum and it is easy to lose sight of how the conversion occurred, but, if we return for a moment to Chapone, it is possible to discern a sense of the procedure.

To begin with, the process emerges descriptively as a programme of internalization. In her opening letter, Chapone tells her niece ‘it is high time to *store your mind* with those principles, which must direct your conduct, and fix your character’ (2). (My emphasis.) Part of this storehouse is conceived as innate, for example, ‘The great laws of morality [which] are indeed written in our hearts’ (13), and to this might be added New Testament precepts, and the ‘inward affections’ (62) which are their subject. At the same time, the call for mental qualities to

⁵³ Armstrong, p.73.

⁵⁴ Armstrong, p.79.

engage psychologically (Armstrong's 'labor') emerges: the reasoning that must be applied to discern moral laws, the good sense that 'improves by exercise' (93), the control over behaviour, 'which it must now be *your own* care to correct and subdue' (119). The regulation of the personal economy thus becomes bound to the procedures of household management through the representation of economic behaviour in psychological terms.

Such a reading, which also locates the nature of this economic behaviour within a specific moral economy, allows us to consider how the concept of self-sufficiency marks its presence in the discourse of instructional literature. As a first step, we might recall how self-sufficiency can be defined in relation to the provision of necessary resources. By this, the moral economy in which girls are instructed operates as the supply of educational resources, encompassing curriculum learning, practical abilities, managerial skills and qualities of mind resources which are culturally designated as both necessary and sufficient for the purpose of producing wives and mothers as close as possible to the desired ideal.⁵⁵ In this sense, the personal economy of the appropriately educated female was self-sufficient in the sense that it was shaped to structure the supply of resources and to manage them accordingly. Yet, although this formulation of self-sufficiency can be discerned in the conduct books, it does not seem acceptable as a final reading: in fact, to adopt an Armstrongian phrasing, it reads more like a Self-sufficiency That is Not Self-sufficiency.

The effect is produced in part by the conduct books' own authorization of the formulation through their inscription of the individual's initiation into collective values. In some books, indeed, the process is textured by the form itself. One

⁵⁵ And why for example, the learned lady is *not* celebrated: she represents an excess of resources, a breach of sufficiency.

example of this would be *The Polite Lady*, predominantly written as a series of letters from mother to daughter, but with some of the daughter's responses included. Sophia's desire for advice, her requests for moral guidance and her awareness of her participation in a learning process all combine with a strong sense of duty expressed towards the mother who is undertaking the initiation procedure. Accordingly Sophia acknowledges the best return she can make to her mother for all 'the obligations you are daily laying upon me' is to 'become a virtuous and accomplished woman' (32). In another example, Ann Murry presents *Mentoria* in the form of a series of dialogues, which similarly allows the pupils to describe their induction into a system of collective values through their apposite questions, demonstrations of understanding and expressions of gratitude. Form, by this means, becomes a representation of 'Self-sufficiency That is Not Self-sufficiency' ; it enacts the containment of the young women's instructional experience (presumably in the role of ideal reader too) within the framework of a moral economy which uses its resources to eliminate tensions between itself and the personal economies of those it inducts. The regulation of these different economies – the moral, the personal, the domestic – is expressed in the conduct books as a single form of economic behaviour; a form of behaviour whose practices and modes reveal it to be self-control. 'Self-sufficiency That is Not Self-sufficiency' is, in fact, the conduct books' discursive representation of self-control.

Whether this formulation of self-sufficiency is the only reading possible within eighteenth-century instructional procedures is addressed more fully in the next section. The conduct books' own agenda of bringing moral and personal economies into alignment stages an implicit rejection of self-sufficiency's suggestion of independence or autonomy in economic behaviour (using economic

in its broadest sense). Often this emerges by default, as a final brief commentary will illustrate.

Juliana-Susannah Seymour's *The Conduct of a Married Life* was published in 1743.⁵⁶ Addressed to 'a Young Lady, her Relation Lately Married', the book presents advice on how to achieve happiness as a wife by putting into practice the foundations laid by a careful education. Government of behaviour and effective family management are some of the familiar topics covered, and the overall ethos can be summed up by the book's opening observations that 'There is only one Path by which a married Woman can arrive at Happiness, and this is by conforming herself to the Sentiments of her Husband' (2). The intimate conveyance of female experience is distorted however by the fact that the authorizing voice of Juliana-Susannah Seymour is masking the actual – male – author of the book, John Hill. Whether or not a contemporary readership would have been aware of this (not unusual) gender substitution, it cannot help but inflect the moral atmosphere of the book in specific ways, as in the prescriptive and directive pronouncement that, there being 'a real Superiority in the Husband', 'you must join with all Woman-kind in subscribing to it' (172); or in the use of the collective pronouns 'we' and 'us' to create the illusion of a feminine community of values, as in 'Men constitute the World, and make its Customs. Yet we may pardon this, since 'tis a Regard to us that is its Foundation' (105).

But the more remarkable strategic effects of this book arise from the masking Hill *advocates* rather than the one he adopts. In calling for women to be silent, obedient and chaste, 'Seymour' reiterates the standard conduct book litany, but in the letters 'On Conformity of Tempers' and 'On Conformity of Sentiments',

⁵⁶ Juliana-Susannah Seymour (i.e. John Hill), *The Conduct of Married Life* (London: R. Baldwin, 1753). All references are cited in the text.

‘Seymour’ sets out an instructional agenda whereby women can turn themselves into ‘the faithful Mirrour’ [*sic*] (204) of their husbands with no thought, opinion or design distinct from his own. This begins with them first teaching themselves to smile ‘on the Occasions on which he smiles’, frowning when he frowns and ‘viewing all Things in the Light in which you see he views them’, with the objective of acquiring a ‘Likeness of Countenance’ (195-96). Building on this, a wife can then learn to think like her husband, adopting his disposition and ‘making yourself as like to the Lord of your Wishes in Soul and Sentiment, as you will have done in Countenance’ (199). ‘Seymour’ argues that, in adopting this conduct, women are behaving as reasoning and autonomous beings. On the one hand, such a course, although ‘prudent’ and ‘virtuous’, would be ‘servile’, for ‘There is a Meanness in such a Submission that disgraces a free Agent’; on the other, a woman’s reason will tell her that conformity is desirable and, therefore, by following this conduct, she is not degraded (204-5).

This argument is spurious of course and ‘Seymour’ ‘herself’ struggles to reconcile its paradoxes, weakly concluding, ‘You will find, my Dear, that I have advis’d you to the Attainment of the same Advantage, by the Use of your Reason, which this wou’d make the Effect of your sacrificing it’ (205). The agenda is, in fact, to eliminate the scope for autonomy, not merely by conflating the individual’s personal economy with a particular moral economy, but to do so by first subsuming it into a masculine representative of that moral economy, in effect making assurance doubly sure.⁵⁷ ‘Seymour’ here represents in more extreme form what other conduct books merely imply, but it helps suggest how such books controlled their rendition of self-sufficiency in a discursive sense. Yet the equation between personal and

⁵⁷ The slippery gender identities used by Hill underline this by the simultaneous rendering of masculine and feminine personal economies in the book’s authorizing strategies.

moral economies, between individual and collective systems of values is not resolved by conduct literature alone. Before coming directly to a discussion of Sheridan's Sidney Bidulph narratives, I aim first to investigate these ideas more closely in the context of the concept of communities.

Moral Values, Education and the Idea of Community: Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*

The word community suggests a number of ideas: of a body of people, often within a specific locality; of a shared way of life, such as the religious or professional; or of shared intellectual or moral interests and values. The motif of community occurs frequently in literature as a narrative or thematic strategy of organization and exploration, typically creating microcosms that either reflect or challenge society in the broader sense and forefronting the individual's position (or dilemma) as part of this. In the eighteenth century, the motif was a useful one across literary forms for purveying the interests of the discourse of sociability. It was also used to image sites of domesticity and femininity. These latter depictions could carry overtones of self-sufficiency, as in Sarah Fielding's representation of the boarding-school society in *The Governess* or Frances Brooke's of the Belmont estate in *Lady Julia Mandeville*, but, as this last example reveals, the 'golden age' ideals it purveys are ultimately vulnerable to the incursions of the *external* world. It was a threat exposed by Sarah Fielding too in her David Simple narratives, where the 'happy society' of friends is dismantled by the hostile forces of a corrupt world. One effect of depicting communities, then, was to suggest non-alignment with wider social structures with the purpose of critiquing them.

A different set of effects is obtained, however, where the communities represented are all-female. In her book *Communities of Women: an Idea in Fiction* (1978), Nina Auerbach refers to such communities as ‘emblems of female self-sufficiency’. They did not limit female experience to the context of masculine approval, social elevation and biological rewards, but enabled individual maturity.⁵⁸ Some eighteenth-century examples of these communities might embrace the ‘Bluestockings’, women whose intellectual interests instinctively led them to form friendships of mutual support, which fostered autonomy through independent thought and self-expression.⁵⁹ The Bath community of women, in which Sarah Fielding was a leading figure, similarly provided its members with intellectual stimulus and support, and represented, in Betty Rizzo’s words, ‘a remarkable group [...] of independent-minded women, strong, self-sufficient, and resourceful’.⁶⁰ Another member of the Bath circle, Sarah Scott, offered a literary expression of community in her 1762 novel *A Description of Millenium Hall*, which also reflected aspects of her own life.⁶¹ This work, in which a group of women establish an economically and socially autonomous community whose members are sufficient to themselves, will provide the main substance of the discussion in this section. In part, the nature of the community itself will be investigated in terms of its economic (again, in the broadest sense) structures; but I am also concerned here, at a point in the 1760s which makes the work exactly contemporaneous with Sheridan’s

⁵⁸ Nina Auerbach, *Communities of Women: an Idea in Fiction* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp.5-6.

⁵⁹ Sylvia Harcstark Myers details some of these mutually supportive friendships between women writers in *The Bluestocking Circle*.

⁶⁰ Betty Rizzo, *Companions Without Vows: Relationships Among Eighteenth-Century British Women* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1994), p.307. Members of the Bath community included Lady Barbara Montagu, Elizabeth Cutts, Margaret Mary Ravaud and others, as well as Sarah Fielding and Sarah Scott. See Rizzo, pp.39-40.

⁶¹ The presence of Scott’s life in the novel is discussed in Rizzo’s *Companions Without Vows*, chapters 2 and 13. There are additional comments in Schellenberg’s *The Conversational Circle*, p.100 and Gary Kelly’s introduction to *Millenium Hall* (Broadview, 1997), p.40. This is the edition used for this discussion and all further references are cited in the text.

Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph, with the representation of education and conduct issues and how these are expressed in relation to the community's engagement with the moral autonomy of the individual.

Scott's *Millenium Hall* develops ideas articulated nearly seventy years earlier by Mary Astell's call in *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694-7) for a 'Monastery' to be erected to accommodate single women seeking a 'Happy Retreat' from the world. Advocating an active interdependence centred on 'doing Offices of Charity and Beneficence to others', Astell's community is also intended as a site of female intellectual improvement, whereby 'ingenious Conversation', 'real Wisdom' and 'instructive discourses' will counter the prejudices of custom against female education.⁶² In addition to this, the 'Monastery' offers a solution to the economic predicament of the 'Ladies' it addressed, making possible a life of single self-sufficiency.⁶³ In Scott's work – and it seems probable she would have been familiar with Astell's writings – the fostering of female learning and educational responsibilities is expressed as part of a more explicit attempt to model a reformed system of economic practices.⁶⁴ Gary Kelly's introduction to the 1997 edition of the novel describes this as a 'feminized economy', which acts as a 'metonymy for the reformed economy of the state itself'.⁶⁵ The women of Millenium Hall are thus placed in a dynamic which gives scope to their moral and economic self-sufficiency and which establishes the autonomy of the community, but which simultaneously requires a communal expression of values, countering individualistic self-assertion.

⁶² The text is contained in Bridget Hill's *The First English Feminist*. This reference pp.150-2.

⁶³ See Ruth Perry, *The Celebrated Mary Astell: an Early English Feminist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), especially pages 105 and 300.

⁶⁴ See Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg, 'A Paradise Like Eve's: Three Eighteenth Century English Female Utopias', *Women's Studies*, 9, 1982, pp. 263-273. This reference p.270.

⁶⁵ For details of this see p.24 of the Broadview edition. Kelly argues that Millenium Hall represents 'a utopian vision of gentry capitalism reformed according to bluestocking feminism' (26). The particular form of revisionism it portrays, he contends, feminizes and Christianizes capitalist procedures and reflects the novel's programme of re-writing class and gender relations.

Without replicating the educational model established in an earlier section of this discussion, there are sufficient points of connection here to make the Millenium Hall model a useful means for investigating the former in more detail.

Millenium Hall begins as the (unidentified) male narrator records, in a letter to a friend, the discovery of a remarkable society of women living in retirement, happened upon when his coach breaks down, stranding him and his younger travelling companion, Lamont, somewhere in the West Country. The estate of Millenium Hall impresses him immediately as an 'earthly paradise', a 'fairy land' and 'an assured asylum against every evil' (58). One of the proprietors of the Hall, Mrs Maynard, turns out to be a distant relative and as the narrator becomes more captivated by the principles and plan of the community, he encourages her to recount the stories of the women who founded it. These accounts form one of the two narrative thrusts of the novel, the other being the narrator's own descriptive commentary on his stay. Together, the two strands integrate to form a juxtaposed vision of the individual's position within differently structured value systems.

The subjects of Mrs Maynard's narrations have all experienced persecution in a world that is shown to use women's subordination to exploit their vulnerable, dependent position. The orphaned Louisa Mancel is brought up by a guardian, Mr Hintman, whose intention is to seduce her when she reaches sexual maturity. Mrs Morgan is forced into a loveless marriage with a rich but cruel husband. Lady Mary Jones teeters on the brink of seduction by Lord Robert St George, while Harriot Trentham is rejected by Mr Alworth, who privileges sexual passion over recognition of her qualities of mind and moral worth. Scott uses the elusiveness of the ideal companionate marriage to emphasize the insecurity of the female position. She also shows how the oppression and control inherent in masculine economic and

social power are just as likely to manifest themselves in female behaviour as in male. Mrs Morgan, for example, falls victim to her step-mother's machinations, while the others are exposed to the folly, envy and wilfulness of female authority figures. (It seems significant that all the women have lost their mothers.) The most positive relationships Scott depicts are those of female friendship, that between Louisa Mancel and Miss Melvyn (Mrs Morgan) being explored in particular detail as a 'true friendship' in which the 'boundaries and barriers' of wealth and possessions are broken down, with 'all property laid in one undistinguished common' (93). Female friendship becomes a discrete space in which 'real world' economic values are re-aligned to represent a refuge from and critique of exploitative, hierarchical power relations, just as the narratives' position, embedded in the Millenium Hall setting which frames them, indicates Scott's commitment to an encompassing value system founded on community, interdependence and the sufficiency of female friendship.

However, if Millenium Hall represents an autonomous alternative to the collective values of the world from which it distances itself, the very fact it is a community might appear to replace one system of collective values with another, thus compromising individual self-determination by the same processes of obedience and submission. The anomalous potential of this is accentuated by the fact that the women of Millenium Hall are recognizably exemplary in terms of conduct book ideals of femininity and domesticity. They are pious, charitable, despatch household business with efficiency, display self-control, and are all 'good oeconomists' (109). Given that these anomalies are immanent in the text, we need to investigate how Scott controlled her presentation of a 'better alternative' in a self-sufficient female space without falling prey to the replication of the collective

values she is addressing. One way of implementing this investigation is to consider the theme of education in the novel and to do so in terms of the idea and processes of cultural reproduction – the inducting of the personal economy into a prescribed moral economy – explored in earlier sections.

The narrated histories of the Millenium Hall ladies all make a point of chronicling their subjects' educational experiences. Louisa Mancel is 'educated in all accomplishments proper for a young person of fashion and fortune' (82). She is sent to the same, highly commended 'French boarding school' (82) as Miss Melvyn, who, being several years older than Louisa, comes to fulfil an instructional role coloured by 'the tenderness of a mother' (88). Louisa's 'greatest improvement' is 'from reading with Miss Melvyn' (91), who is also 'most attentive to inculcate into her mind the principles of true religion' (91). The specificity with which Scott mentions this last point contrasts with her rendition of the school's curriculum, the 'extras' of 'dancing, music, and drawing; besides other things generally taught at schools' (91). Scott's interest is less in the substance than the principles.

This point is emphasized throughout the sequence of the narratives. Lady Mary Jones, whose history follows, is 'initiated into every diversion' (174) by an aunt who possesses all 'external accomplishments', but is 'destitute of any stable principles' (173). The resulting 'errors in [Lady Mary's] conduct' are shown to be 'the fault of education' (186) and, as such, are acquired. They are corrected through self-education and reflection, a self-sufficient endeavour that is explored further in Miss Selvyn's history. Educated at home by her widower father, she is taught self-reliance, 'to seek only in herself' (200) for all rational pleasures and occupations. In the matter of religious principles, too, she is left 'free to form that judgment, which should in time seem most rational to her' (200). Scott is not happy about this,

however, and provides a worthy clergyman to convince the father and teach the daughter ‘the most necessary of all things’, namely the ‘truths of christianity’ (203).

The consistency of this refrain pulls together Scott’s exploration of different aspects of female education. The critique is blended with the corrective in individual cases, becoming noticeably more bold as a device as the histories proceed and as the Millenium Hall model amplifies its authority in contrast with the examples of women – Lady Melvyn, Lady Sheerness, Miss Melman – who display the worst aspects of women who have been educated to please men. Accordingly, the last history, that of Harriot Trentham, criticizes the arts a girl is taught ‘to contradict the thoughts of her heart’ and acquire the same ‘affectation and conceit as her mother’ (224). In a particularly damning view of the mother’s role in cultural reproduction and a renewed assertion of the significance of independent and rational humanity, Scott, as in the case of Miss Selvyn, makes Harriot’s education the responsibility of a sensible father. Yet here, too, limitations are revealed, since for all Harriot’s depth of intellectual attainment ‘in almost every branch of learning’ (227), her artlessness leaves her vulnerable to imposition and is shown to be as deficient in its way as the practices of those who attempt to encroach on her.

The inset narratives of *Millenium Hall*, then, establish a problematic representation of female education. Scott investigates this in a formal dialectic with the Millenium Hall alternative, moving between the two narrative modes to do so. Organized by processes of criticism and correction and authorized by the principles of Christianity, a space is created in which a reformed moral economy takes shape, realized at Millenium Hall. Scott takes the conventional (conduct book) values of female excellence and re-inscribes them to ends other than pleasing men. She also turns the women’s negative position in the world to a positive, instrumental role at

the Hall, beginning with the intellectual and moral decisions the women make to join the society and accept its practices and regulations. This, indeed, is Scott's most emphatic deployment of the idea of community, for in making the subscription to its values a matter of independent choice, she exposes how women are educated to neither exercise ~~nor~~ expect any such choice in *lived reality*. Thus, the Millenium Hall society is autonomous in inception as well as presence, in its individual proprietors as well as its moral economy.

Yet for all its emphasis on retirement, the Millenium Hall community retains an engagement with the world outside its confines and is neither anti-male, nor anti-marriage. This emerges in its educational programme, which has a common objective of preparing girls (and boys) for employment or marriage. It is necessary here to draw a distinction between a moral economy autonomous of *external reality* and how – or if – that moral economy observes autonomy in its educational practices. The potential inference is that *all* moral economies use the same educational procedures to effect the reproduction of their values and that, in doing so, they secure replication at the expense of autonomy.

The idea of education as an integral part of Millenium Hall's project is established early in the novel. The narrator's introduction into the mansion's interior presents him with what he takes to be a contemporary version of 'the Attick school' (58). Groups of girls are engaged in drawing, carving, engraving, writing, sewing, reading and translating, accompanied and supervised by the ladies of the Hall. We later learn that these girls have been rescued from destitution and educated within the house in order to be rendered 'acceptable, where accomplished women of an humble rank and behaviour are wanted, either for the case of a house or children' (160). Equipped with 'excellent principles' and 'enlarged understandings' and

taught to be mindful of their ‘menial state’, these girls fulfil the Millenium Hall objective of doing ‘extensive good’ by having their future service directed ‘to be as beneficial to society as possible’ (160). The same agenda runs through the estate’s instituting of schools and alms-houses; in the latter, the elderly women are encouraged to teach the children of the poor to spin and knit, while the schools promote neatness and cleanliness and teach girls reading, writing, ‘casting accounts’ (196), needlework, spinning and knitting, recognizably the staples of a female education in charity and day schools. Girls – and boys too – (young couples are helped to establish themselves when they decide to marry) are also ‘bred up in the strictest piety’ as the ladies ‘endeavour to inculcate the purest principles in their tender minds’ (197).

At the same time, then, as the pupils acquire an education, they are inducted into correct principles. It would appear that, at Millenium Hall, as in the world at large, individual morality is shaped to express a collective morality and that the autonomy of choice enjoyed by the proprietors is not extended to those they educate. The effect is apparently underlined by Scott’s decision not to individuate the pupils; they are simply children of the poor or orphans, a distinct social rank (*and* distinct from the Hall ladies), and recorded as statistics in ‘a register’: thirty apprenticed, three-score ‘fixed in excellent places, and thirty married’ (168). The plan is somewhat different from Sarah Fielding’s in *The Governess*, where the emphasis falls on the moral self-sufficiency of the individual pupils, allowing them agency in the discrimination of value systems. This is in part due to Scott’s separate focus on contemporary concerns with female education, but it is also an indication of the wider systems structured by Millenium Hall. For the community is a complex arrangement of different economies, the literary expression of which is mediated by

the education theme in order to show how these economies engage and interconnect.

Garry Kelly reads the economy of Millenium Hall as effectively a capitalist one, albeit feminized and Christianized as part of a reformist agenda. Yet the forms of productivity and profit do not strike one as capitalist in emphasis. Mrs Trentham's fortune is used to establish 'a manufacture of carpets and ruggs [*sic*]' with the ladies acting as stewards in order to protect its success against 'an enterprising undertaker'. They 'prevent the poor from being oppressed by their superiors' and, most tellingly, remunerate labour, not in terms of productivity, but according to proportional effort, children and the elderly being paid most (243-4). One of the elderly inhabitants of the alms cottages describes how they used to suffer under the "'Squires'", who "'grew rich, because they had our work, and paid us not enough to keep life and soul together'" (65). Now they trade services with one another in mutual self-help and are encouraged to spin, their work being sent to a weaver. If they do not produce enough, the supply is supplemented, the accent being on employment rather than productivity. The narrator himself depicts Millenium Hall as a self-sufficient economy, observing how the park had plainly been 'many years in the possession of good oeconomists' (109). The river is well stocked with fish, the hill with rabbits, even the pigeon house, he is told, "'affords a sufficient supply to our family, and many of our neighbours'" (110). The estate provides them with "'all the necessaries of life'" (110). The tendency here is less towards capitalist enterprise than non-~~exploitative~~, communal interdependence.

The relationship of *this* economy and the moral economy described throughout the above section is also clearly an interdependent one. This contrasts with the inset narratives where moral values are typically depicted in conflict with

economic ones. The desire to effect this re-alignment is shown through the education motif. The girls from the Millenium Hall schools are much sought after as wives because their “‘industry and quickness of understanding’” arising “‘from the manner of their education, has proved more profitable to their husbands than a more ample dower’” (168). This economic proficiency and moral excellence critiques the profligacy of women educated to emulate their superiors, who squander the “‘honest tradesman’[s]” income in dress and dissipation (164). Mrs Trentham uses this to point out that “‘The example of the great infects the whole community’” (164). This being so, it is interesting that Mrs Mancel later claims “‘We do not set up for reformers’” (166). This can be read as a desire to deny aggressive individualism, for it belongs to a wider strategy of rendering the community’s economic structures without directly confronting the position of the individual’s personal economy within these. Lady Mary Jones may remind the narrator, when he suggests Millenium Hall’s essential self-sufficiency, that “‘the mind will still have many [wants] which would drive us into society’” (110), but the emphasis remains directed outwards to conversation, communication, friendship, rather than inwards. Furthermore, although the inset narratives describe the individual experiences of their subjects, none of the women relates her own story and we hear their voices only from within the community. That Scott chose, as we have seen, not to deal with the personal economy as part of educational procedures is part of this too, for it suggests her concern in this work was primarily with the significance of collective values and their organization into a viable alternative economy. The thorough integration of the individual into the alternative is a crucial factor for it implies the eradication of the moral conflicts that beset the ~~external~~ world. Inasmuch as the personal economy *is* depicted, then, it is done so as part of a

community and, by implication, is autonomous and self-sufficient as far as is compatible with, first, the community's own autonomy and self-sufficiency, and, second, the processes of integration.

Frances Sheridan, as we shall see, was concerned with many of the same issues as Scott. She deployed and investigated competing moral economies, using themes of female conduct and education to move between them. However, unlike Scott in *Millenium Hall*, Sheridan suggests this could only be done by exploring the personal economy of the individual and its relationship to these wider economies. She is also more explicit about the insistence on compliance in female instructional agendas, exploring it directly rather than in terms of integration. The security of Mrs Mancel's 'we' (as in "we do not set up for reformers") thus gives way to Sidney Bidulph's more private conflicts about accepting a collective or family morality. Her words, quoted earlier, opining 'I think we ought always to form some laws to ourselves for the regulation of our conduct' contrast with Mrs Mancel's 'we wish to regulate ourselves by the laws laid down to us' (that is Christian laws) (166). The following discussion of Frances Sheridan's *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* and the *Conclusion of the Memoirs* addresses the nature of these laws; it returns to the idea of (self-) regulation in order to examine the relationship between different economic structures and procedures; and it uses the female sentimental novel to extend the exploration of self-sufficiency in instructional discourse.

***Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*: 'An admirable oeconomist'**

Frances Sheridan's sentimental novel of female virtue in distress, published in 1761, was an enormous contemporary success, though its moral scheme

provoked confusion among eighteenth-century critics. There was a sense that Sheridan had infringed the certainties that should constitute the sentimental novel's moral economy, overbalancing it into a too potent economy of distress. Sidney Bidulph's involvement with the attractive, but fissile Orlando Faulkland obfuscates the sentimental feminine ideals of delicacy, modesty and (filial) obedience by positing their inefficacy in the face of more worldly demands. There is no consolation in ultimate marriage for this sentimental heroine and hero, only the suffering of an acute moral refinement excruciatingly drawn out in misunderstandings and misadventures, and culminating in death. The only consolation Sheridan does seem able to offer her heroine, and by implication those the book hopes to educate in moral and feeling, is that, if not in this life, then in the next, virtue will get its reward.⁶⁶

The novel's modern commentators have been – and are – predominantly exercised by the implications of Sheridan's handling of sentimental values in the context of the development of the novel (of sentiment) itself. Alongside writers such as Sarah Fielding, Sheridan's status as a female author is both invoked and situated as part of a Richardsonian legacy of values, shared and modified. In his book *Grandison's Heirs* (1985), Gerard A. Barker identifies Sheridan's Faulkland as the next in line to Richardson's exemplary and influential hero.⁶⁷ The feminocentricity of the later novel produces a more realistic figure as hero, since Faulkland's function is to allow the exemplary expression of female values rather than to represent an ideal himself. Margaret Anne Doody considers the novel's

⁶⁶ Jean Coates Cleary points out in her introduction to the Oxford World's Classics edition that the theme of poetic justice 'raged with particular energy in England during the third quarter of the eighteenth century' (xi).

⁶⁷ Gerard A. Barker, *Grandison's Heirs: The Paragon's Progress in the Late Eighteenth-Century English Novel* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1985).

moral architecture to be infused with the past's impact on the present, a formal arrangement which exposes the rocky foundations of morality itself.⁶⁸ She regards the attempt to assert moral ideals amidst awareness of powerlessness as a particularly feminine insight, a formulation that allows some unexpected readings, including the surprising reconstruction of Lady Bidulph as a proto-feminist. Finally, both Janet Todd in *The Sign of Angellica* (1989) and Patricia Spacks in *Desire and Truth* (1990) focus on Sheridan's investigation of sentimental principles.⁶⁹ The former sees her handling this in terms of individual predicament, creating positions of isolation from which crucial questions can be posed testing the value (or price) of commitment to sentimental beliefs. The latter finds a 'curious aggressiveness' in the novel's sentimentalism, in part a functional reaction to the 'moral blank' of Sidney's acute non-assertiveness.⁷⁰

All these readings identify an ambiguous relationship between moral ideals and sentimental affliction, predicating this on Sheridan's unusual strategy of declining to reward virtue in this world. Sidney's obedience, delicacy and self-control may be exemplary, but where do they get her? (Or those whom her exemplary role affects?) Here, I wish to build upon the observations of those commentators who discuss the psychological dimension of Sheridan's work, for, in showing Sidney's writing of the moral niceties of her predicament, Sheridan structures, with remarkable insight, a personal economy which, although highly susceptible to inculcated values, is nevertheless capable of overriding the conditional reflex to set aside independence of mind when it comes to opposing authority. (At least in theory, if not in deed.) This locates education's conformity-

⁶⁸ Margaret Doody in *Fetter'd or Free?* pp. 324-51.

⁶⁹ Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800* (London: Virago, 1989); Patricia Spacks, *Desire and Truth: Functions of Plot in Eighteenth-Century English Novels* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

⁷⁰ Spacks, pp. 136-7.

autonomy problematic in the very text of the novel and does so, moreover, in the specific form of the journal. Sentimentalism's essential reader-orientation invokes this form as peculiarly apposite for the representation of a particular moral vision.

However, in Sheridan's hands the form becomes something more than this: it operates as a self-sufficient space – a realm of private consciousness and monoaudience – where an individual morality can be expressed alongside the description of deeds and words demanded by both a familial and collective morality. To a degree, it is a utopian self-sufficiency in the sense that Millenium Hall is; a self-enclosed female community of scribe (Sidney) and addressee (Cecilia), in which the autonomy of a moral economy is made dynamic, regulated by the personal economy's independent functioning. In addition, these metaphors of economy serve to remind us of the changing economic and sexual categories Sidney occupies during the course of her sentimental career. She is a virgin, wife, mother and widow. These role shifts, rather than projecting the cohesion of the instructional ideals by which women are to be guided, in fact expose confusion in certain key terms and concepts – conduct, (self-) regulation, obedience, female learning and 'oeconomy'. The last term appears in the works in its conventional sense and attribution (that is to the ideal woman's domestic self and practices), but I propose to adopt it, as earlier, to render the complex and ambiguous interrelationship between economic positions and procedures structured in female instructional discourse. Thus, the description of Sidney by her husband, Mr Arnold, as 'an admirable oeconomist' (251) is both a typical instance of masculine approval *and* an opportunity to read for a more resonant nexus of female abilities.

One of the first things that strikes the reader in the opening pages of the *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* is the degree to which Sidney wishes to conduct

herself as her mother would have her. Lady Bidulph's ever-presence leaves us in no doubt of the acute mother-daughter proximity which has shaped Sidney's education, for its atmosphere pervades the book's opening events as Sir George Bidulph introduces the eligible and already smitten Faulkland to his sister as a suitor. Sidney may complain of being made to feel 'like a piece of goods that was to be shewn to the best advantage to a purchaser' (19-20), but her real concern is 'to have my mother's approbation of my conduct' (20). Lady Bidulph, having educated her daughter 'in the strictest principles of virtue' (11) readily commends her behaviour. Even Sir George recommends Sidney to Faulkland in terms of her 'excellent education' in obedience. However, once it is disclosed by a disaffected servant that Faulkland has made a young woman pregnant and the engagement is broken off, familial moral axes emerge, mother and daughter on one side, Sir George on the other. The latter can no longer find anything to commend in the former's 'nice scruples' (52) and Sheridan's wielding of conflictual moral economies begins to take shape. More problematically, the mother-daughter axis, outwardly steadfast, is subtly interrogated in Sidney's journal, a process that casts an odd reflection on Lady Bidulph's supervisory authority, since Sidney's commentary on her mother's words and deeds seems probingly monitory in its turn. The whole question of moral, social and cultural reproduction in the maternal educational role presents itself here.

With the exception of a few direct details – her economic efficiency, skill with the needle and an ability to read Latin (courtesy of Sir George's instruction) – and a range of inference, Sheridan does not identify the exact curriculum of Sidney's education. What we learn is more to do with its tone, which is confined, scrupulous; 'rigid' (466) as Cecilia puts it. It is a moral education above all and

mirrors Lady Bidulph's own as 'severe and recluse' (341). Sheridan uses these tensions to question the transmission of values in education: the Bidulph women are considered as accomplished and virtuous models of their sex and their impulse to reproduce this would appear worthy and desirable according to the ideals of the time; but Sheridan shows only the disastrous impact of their efforts, as Sidney and her mother find it is events which are reproducing themselves, not moral ideals.

Lady Bidulph's recounting of how her own planned marriage, a love match, was overthrown by the bridegroom's earlier involvement with another woman is so prescient that it almost seems to precipitate Sidney's replicating experience. The extent of the irony is underlined by Sidney's words when, in allowing her mother to control the moral response to the situation, she comments, 'I was determined to shew her that I would endeavour to imitate her' (48-49): for the essential imitation turns out to be submitting to an alternative marriage (to Mr Arnold), as her mother did before her. Thus, Sheridan confounds the expectations of cultural reproduction in the mother-daughter relationship, complicating this across the span of the *Memoirs*. She gains the means to scrutinize complex moral issues by this, forefronting the concept of obedience; and she also uses the temporal elongation of the text to suggest how the maternal educative role can operate as a feminine version of male hereditary processes. This allows us to read the work's economic metaphors in particular ways.

To take, first, the concept of obedience, we saw earlier how programmes of female education and conduct directed themselves to producing women who were properly submissive and deferential to masculine and parental authority. The strategies employed were based on a potent mix of assumption and reward; assumption that female obedience was never in question, and reward in judiciously

allowing the task of learning obedience to be a hard one, for which women should be esteemed. Like many aspects of eighteenth-century femininity, obedience is poised between the innate and acquired. In the case of Sidney Bidulph, a perfect conduct orthodoxy is expressed in her resolve that her every action 'be determined by those to whom I owed obedience' (268). This originates in her being 'accustomed from my infancy to pay an implicit obedience to the best of mothers' (28) and continues into her marriage to Arnold, where she silently submits to his adulterous liaison with Mrs Gerrarde and her own wrongful dismissal from home and children. (The echo of Lady Sarah Pennington here accentuates the fact that women had little alternative but to obey.) Given Sheridan's use of the sentimental agenda of distress to suggest ambiguities in certain key concepts, Sidney's obedience is depicted in relation to its repercussions. Sheridan shows that obedience and individual moral responsibility are incompatible, further ironizing the maternal role of producing model daughters.

The place where this begins to be felt is in Sheridan's treatment of the value attached to consistency. Uniformity in behaviour is insisted on in conduct literature as the true sign of moral excellence. By subtly destabilizing the notion of consistency, Sheridan also questions the authority of a collective morality to demand obedience. In Sidney's description of her mother's use of authority as rigid and severe, it is unclear whether she speaks in acceptance or criticism of 'the best of mothers', referring to her as 'kind', 'indulgent' (12), 'considerate' (16) on the one hand, as 'despotic in her government of me' (50) on the other. Sheridan also shows Sidney poised between acquiescence and resentment as the hastily proposed marriage to Arnold gains momentum. Sidney's (private) outcry that she is being made 'a puppet of', 'treated like a baby, that knows not what is fit for it to choose

or to reject' (85), is a passionate assertion of the right to self-determination, but it rapidly gives way, in a letter to Sir George, to her resolve to abide by her fixed rule of conduct, 'of preferring to my own the happiness of those who are most dear to me' (93). The irony of consistency is that it requires the subduing of private inconsistencies to be accomplished.

Sheridan's enactment of filial obedience is thus played out amidst enormous tensions. Sidney's self-suppression renders obedience superior to moral self-sufficiency by making it the greater moral virtue. In this way, Sheridan powerfully charges these concepts, questioning the nature of obedience itself, its implications for women, and, above all, the repercussions of allowing one person the right to regulate the moral behaviour of another. Centring this in the mother-daughter relationship deploys individual moral behaviour in the context of a confirming, affirming and self-perpetuating feminocentric community. The effect can be disconcerting, such as when Sidney becomes a mother in her turn. Significantly conscious of the three-step generational link, Sidney, in contemplating her child, finds she can 'more than ever rejoice in having, by an obedience, which perhaps I once thought had some little merit in it, contributed so much to the repose of a parent to whom I have such numberless obligations' (117). Her imaginative appreciation of filial duty has changed, becoming less of a personal achievement, more of an interpersonal due. Meditating on 'the tender sentiments' and 'sweet anxieties, that my honoured and beloved mother' felt towards *her*, Sidney now asserts in relation to her own child 'a right to all the duty, all the filial love that this creature can shew me, in return for my fondness' (117). The irony of her words – explored at large in the *Conclusion of the Memoirs* – is lost on Sidney. Sheridan

seizes on this forgetfulness of earlier ambivalence to demonstrate that obedience – and its charge on the individual moral self – must necessarily have repercussions.

The theme has emerged earlier in the novel, darkly and bitterly, in the story of Lady Grimston and her daughter, Mrs Vere. Rigid, insular, anachronistic – ‘you would take her for a lady of Charles the First’s court at least’ (61-2) – Lady Grimston has proved uncompromising in expecting ‘sole authority’ (66) over whom her children marry and is ‘unused to be controuled’ (67). Mrs Vere tells Sidney how she fell in love against her mother’s wishes and, with the assistance of her father, entered into a private marriage. Having confounded Lady Grimston’s certainty that ‘my immediate obedience ought to have followed the bare knowledge of her will’ (67), Mrs Vere has never been forgiven, despite the deaths of her father, husband and child and her own subsequently submissive behaviour. Sidney catches the colour of Mrs Vere’s maternal comparisons, seeing Lady Grimston as ‘a tyrant’ (77) and her own mother as ‘an angel’ (77) (perhaps again forgetting her earlier description of Lady Bidulph’s government of her as ‘despotic’ (50)). Yet this is no monochromatic demonizing of Lady Grimston, for Lady Bidulph’s dependence ‘on the judgment of her friend’ (78) and the resulting brokering of Sidney’s marriage to Arnold, which is initiated and concluded at Grimston Hall, provides a more subtle, and more unsettling range of parallels.

Not least of these is the perception of Lady Grimston as ‘pious and charitable’ (62), ‘a pattern of all those virtues of a religion which meekness and forgiveness characterise’ (77). Immured at her seat, from which she has not travelled ten miles in thirty years, temporally displaced in her farthingales and flounces, hers is nevertheless the culturally authoritative voice of maternal values. This is given literal expression on Sidney’s wedding day when Lady Grimston

‘preached an hour long about the duty of children to their parents; and how good a wife that woman was likely to make, who had always been exemplary in her filial obedience’ (97). This section of the work may be novelistically dynamic, but Sheridan uses it to reveal what is culturally hidebound. Lady Grimston’s influence is pervasive and authoritarian, exacting its dues with a bleak absence of humanity or self-knowledge. The sterility associated with this insistence on an obedience untested and unquestioning is disturbingly symbolized in Mrs Vere’s story in the image of her delivery of ‘a dead female child’ (74). This disrupts the idea of female educational heredity, at the same time as prefiguring the birth of Sidney’s own children who are both daughters.

This reading of the concept of obedience, then, reveals a crucial and, for the writer, highly productive tension in the novel: the scrupulous adherence to conduct book values is provocatively beset by the exposure of their questionable viability. A further anomaly is expressed in the imaginative presence of Sidney herself. Her words ‘I think we ought always to form some laws to ourselves for the regulation of our conduct’ (27), on the face of it convey a keenly articulated sense of individual moral responsibility, presented, in the assertion of ‘I think’, as a right to personal self-determination. There is also an agency in the idea of forming laws ‘to ourselves’ and in regulating personal conduct. But, as we have seen, in practice Sidney’s agency is circumscribed to the point of non-existence, what Spacks describes as her ‘moral blank’.⁷¹ There is an implication of this in the petering out of that initially assertive ‘I think’ into the collective protection of ‘we’, ‘ourselves’, ‘our’. Nevertheless, whereas Spacks sees the ‘moral blank’ in terms of

⁷¹ Spacks, p.137.

Sidney's acute non-assertiveness, it is possible to read an alternative pathology in what might be styled Sidney's 'Obedience Complex'.

The laws Sidney forms for herself indicate a moral choice and it requires an often vigorous moral courage to observe them: angry defiance and autonomous self-expression remaining a strictly private affair. Yet, what this serves to emphasize is the relationship between individual choice and the collective structuring of the materials from which the laws and regulation of conduct are fashioned. Sheridan's novel expresses the same conflicts implicit in female education and conduct issues, centred on ensuring that an individual, self-sufficient capacity for making choices can only *be* self-sufficient as long as it coincides with a collective moral economy determining the rules and ideals of what choices to make and what forms of behaviour to pursue. In view of this, Spack's perception of Sidney's 'moral blank' seems unreasonable, for 'blank' implies absence, emptiness, an unwritten space, whereas Sidney's consciousness teems with the moral niceties of her position. She may be non-assertive in opposing those to whom she considers she owes obedience, but this in itself requires a paradoxically assertive strength of purpose. Rather, what Sheridan wants us to focus on is exactly what is required of women in becoming the ideal represented in instructional discourse. Sidney's moral competence, her ability to read nuances in registers and behaviour which are lost on Lady Bidulph and her characteristic mingling of adaptability and steadfastness all serve to highlight the impact on the personal economy of internalized moral and psychological constraints. Learning and practising the demands of ideal obedience is not just a difficult lesson with 'some little merit in it' (117); it also requires the ability to manoeuvre between differing moral planes, whereby one's moral self-sufficiency discriminates, makes choices, but is paradoxically expressed through accepting the

processes of regulation decreed by a collective and prescribed morality beyond the autonomous self.

But there is another significant lesson for women to learn, one which has its impact on Sheridan's novel, and that is how to be an adept domestic economist. As the earlier discussion of instructional literatures showed, the connection between virtue and 'oeconomy' in female conduct was seen as indivisible and it is no surprise, therefore, to find Sidney described as 'an admirable oeconomist' (251). Her modesty, obedience, silence and self-control are the manifestations, in virtue, of a deft, frugal and tasteful skill in domestic management. However, taken even in its most basic sense – the monetary (domestically speaking) – the economic dimension of the novel is one that has been consistently overlooked. As I aim to show, Sheridan's treatment of economic issues cannot be separated from the representation of Sidney as a moral subject, or from the relationship between individual and collective moralities. At the same time, her focus on Sidney's shifts from financial stability to retrenchment, from poverty and the problems of how to earn a living to wealth and how, appropriately, to expend a fortune places Sheridan amidst the economic concerns of writers such as Sarah Fielding and Frances Brooke, also anticipating the greater expansiveness with which the theme of women, money and work is handled in the novels of Frances Burney. In order to give breadth to Sheridan's treatment of these concerns, it is necessary now to consider Sidney's changing role during the novel and to examine the implications of rendering moral self-sufficiency in economic terms, and vice versa.

At the end of the *Memoirs*, the vagaries of her ill-fated connection with Faulkland having culminated in their (inadvertently) bigamous marriage and his death, Sidney is depicted, years later and in retirement, relating the events of her life

to her children 'to teach you by my example, that there is no situation in life exempt from trouble' (466). This self-avowedly exemplary role forefronts the female passage through paradigm sexual and economic categories: 'In my virgin state, when I was a wife, and in my widowhood, I was equally persecuted' (467). Sidney's implicit consciousness of the difficulty in accomplishing these female roles is articulated in two principal ways. Firstly, in the context of maternal instruction, for 'By such lessons as these, did this tender parent endeavour to fortify their young minds against the vicissitudes of fortune' (467). Secondly, and perhaps more surprisingly, the didactic and exemplary emphasis of this context falls on money. In contrasting her change from poverty to wealth, Sidney identifies 'the bitterest misfortune of my life', dwelling on the theme to her daughters in order 'to teach them not to place their confidence in riches.' Occurring in the last few lines of the novel and accompanied as it is by hints of fresh calamities, directly attributed to Sidney's 'affluent fortune' (467), moving down into the next generation, the surprising aspect is that the moral purpose of the novel should be expressed so conclusively and instructionally in economic terms. It could be argued that Sheridan simply has not prepared the reader for the explicitness of this particular didactic outcome. However, if we trace the economic themes of the novel, we can see how the progress towards this conclusion has been painstakingly effected.

It is as a daughter, sister and coveted marriage prize that we are first introduced to Sidney. Her moral and economic dependence on her mother and brother mark the customary position of the eighteenth-century young woman, who is of genteel birth, but unmarried. As we have seen, there are ways of experiencing a morally self-sufficient perception of things, even where this is not overtly expressed. However, the limited opportunities for female economic self-sufficiency

see the dependent woman's economic behaviour and awareness, as in Sidney's case, expressed in the precepts of conduct and educational discourse. Sidney's fastidious objection to being talked about in 'that *bargaining* way' (15) by Sir George indicates the feminine preference for distance from the exchange motifs of the political economy. She is also inclined to turn red when the extent of Faulkland's wealth is disclosed, and to take an apt pupil's pleasure in the fact her mother is 'more than ordinarily' 'elegant and exact at her table' (18) on the occasion Faulkland makes his first visit. All these suggest an ideal conduct book girl, well-versed in the modesty and delicate practices associated with domesticity.

After Sidney's marriage to Arnold and the requisite realignment of obedience and dependence from mother to husband, she is given scope as a wife to fulfil her economic education in the 'calm domestic life [which] you know was always my choice' (108). She is 'put into possession' (98) of Arnold Abbey, which she is pleased to find 'in exact order' with 'orderly and well-behaved' servants and everything 'exactly well regulated' (98). We are invited to infer that both here and at their other properties this state of affairs continues, for Sidney does not chronicle the details of her domestic management in her journal. Presumably it is a smooth transition. The one aspect of management she *does* mention, aside from the nursery when her children are born, is in the 'gentle check' she resolves to make on Arnold's 'bounteous spirit'. This is to be done 'without his being conscious of it' and 'only so far as it regards myself [...] for in every other instance his generosity is regulated by prudence' (108). The instance is significant, for in its desire to check, its deflection from self and its reticence, it points to the atmosphere and valorization of self-control advocated in instructional discourse. We have already seen how Sidney practises this 'as a virgin' through the silencing of self and sexual

preference in the moral restraint of obedience, allowing Lady Bidulph to rejoice that ‘your virtue is stronger than your passion’ (49). As a wife, her enactment of the regulation and discipline of self-control becomes a two-stage phenomenon: an initial phase associated with conjugal and domestic felicity; and a second that engages Sheridan particularly, for it allows her to represent the conduct book ideal of self-control using images of moral and economic violation.

We are offered a clear exposition of Sidney’s attitude to self-control in her descriptions of Miss Burchell, the discarded lover and later adulterous wife of Faulkland. Sidney notes her to be ‘made up of tears, and sighs, and romantic wishes’ (308) and, when Sidney’s long-sustained moral conviction that Faulkland should marry her is at last acceded to (by him), Sidney is disturbed to see her ‘wild with transport’ and incoherent (319). This prompts Sidney to advise Miss Burchell to ‘restrain yourself a little’, whereupon she is ‘amazed’ to see ‘the command she so suddenly assumed over her countenance’ (325). What surprises Sidney is that self-control can be consciously artful. Her confession, ‘I own, I was amazed’, suggests revelation as well as shock, and a discomfiting recognition that self-control is a construction, ending the educational conceit of its being a virtue, which, even if acquired is a *naturally* acquired one.

Sidney’s practice of self-control as a wife is depicted as a nexus of interdependent economic procedures. The practical demands of regulating these procedures is most exposed when their integration is threatened by Arnold’s adultery. Sidney immediately attests a moral self-sufficiency founded on ‘the integrity of my own heart’ (130), but the only option this offers her is to ‘let things take their course’ (130). Essentially, she is morally isolated, her self-sufficiency derived from a moral economy of one. Silence becomes her main *mode* of

response', for 'The silent sufferings of the injured must, to a mind not ungenerous, be a sharper rebuke than it is in the power of language to inflict' (137). The equating of silence with self-control is accordingly figured as the regulating device in Sidney's crisis management of personal and moral economies.

The point is accentuated when Arnold wrongly suspects Sidney of misconduct with Faulkland and banishes her from home and children. Still trusting that 'My conduct, in time, I hope, may justify me' (151), Sidney's other concern is to continue to regulate her self-control through silence in order to protect Lady Bidulph. As she tells Cecilia, 'My days are spent in a painful constraint, to conceal the anguish of my own heart, that I may not aggravate that of my poor mother' (157). In this state of moral and economic suspension, Sidney designates herself 'a prisoner and a fugitive' (160), which with its intriguing combination of enclosure and lack of containment in turn suggests the juxtaposed tensions in the technology of self-control. This builds on her earlier *cri de coeur* of 'Whither can I fly?' (145) when Arnold first dismisses her, with its disarming echo of Milton's Satan, which, if seemingly improbable, nevertheless conveys the internal sufferings of a banished and distressed personal economy.⁷²

That Sidney should suffer distress reminds us of Sheridan's questioning of the right of one person to regulate the moral behaviour of another. The idea of silence as the regulating device of self-control in one sense insists that Sidney's moral behaviour be left to speak for itself. Yet self-control also, in effect, 'silences' the autonomy of the personal economy, the outward manifestation of which, in this context, is sentimental distress. In the introduction to this chapter, I showed how Gillian Skinner has argued that an emergent discourse of self-control in the late-

⁷² See Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book IV, lines 73-4.

eighteenth century produced a reading of self-control as a feminized and internalized form of independence, and I later argued that instructional discourse (in the period prior to that with which Skinner is concerned) represents self-control as an acceptable self-sufficiency. It is now possible to suggest that the distressed personal economy is forefronted in the sentimental novel to figure other economic distresses and that the ways in which female education inculcates attitudes to economic regulation is implicated both in this and in how we can read the concept of self-sufficiency in the novel. These ideas emerge more forcibly in the shift Sheridan enacts at the point where Arnold's marriage is re-made, for it is here that Sidney is first explicitly valorized as 'an admirable oeconomist' and that the theme of money occupies an increasingly prominent position alongside the moral workings which the narrative structures.

It is Faulkland who initiates the reconciliation between Arnold and Sidney by removing Mrs Gerrarde from the scene and manoeuvring her into exculpating Sidney to her husband. From Sheridan's point of view, this 'piece of knight-errantry' (189) is only part of a process of reducing Arnold so that Sidney's moral and economic ascendancy over him can be openly acknowledged. It is understood that Sidney is to provide the model for Arnold's future economic behaviour and he pledges 'to imitate her' (251) in order to retrieve both wife and estate. This ironic disruption of the filial educational modelling on the mother is highlighted by Sheridan's decision to depict Lady Bidulph performing a form of marriage ceremony over Sidney and Arnold at the moment of reconciliation 'taking his hand and mine', joining them and pronouncing, 'may you never more be separated, till God, who joined you, calls one or other of you to himself!' (258). Lady Bidulph also reminds Sidney at this juncture that it 'behoves you to use oeconomy' (254) in

order to live well with the ruined Arnold. The maternal role of educating daughters for marriage is thus reinscribed in the very form the marriage now takes. In a further questioning of the right of one individual to regulate the behaviour of another, it is worth pointing out here that the marital career for which Lady Bidulph 'prepares' Sidney comprises a broken engagement, a severed marriage that the mother herself has to reconsecrate, and a bigamous match followed by a second 'widowhood'. Sheridan clearly suggests that obedience to the will of another produces less than satisfactory outcomes.

For now, however, the emphasis falls on Sidney's capacity for frugality in domestic economy. There is something of pleasurable pride when she writes to Cecilia, 'I am grown a perfect farmer's wife, and have got a notable dairy: I am mistress of three cows, I assure you, which more than supply my family' (268). When she adds, 'my garden flourishes like Eden', mentions 'we have more game than we know what to do with' (268) and notes that 'what I call business' – that is her domestic management and regulation of the household – 'is my chief pleasure' (270), one is reminded of the self-sufficient community of Millenium Hall, with its utopian emphasis on adequate provision and, more particularly, on the interdependence of moral and economic values which, typically, conflict in the world beyond the community. Sheridan (and Sidney) presents this interlude in terms of stasis – 'a scene of still life' and 'like a smooth stream' (269), where nothing happens and which figures, if not the resolution, then at least the suspension of those conflicts. In this sense, the atmosphere of the Sidney Castle retreat lacks the economic dynamism of Millenium Hall. The emphasis is on economic retrenchment, although Sidney's comment on the education of her daughters in 'How delightful will be the task of expanding and forming the minds of these two

cherubs!’ (268) is a generative impulse towards growth. Nevertheless, the embodiment of frugal practices in this community posits a link between stasis and self-sufficiency, which is ultimately unproductive economically and, by extension, morally. This is also implied in the connection it allows us to make to the personal economy’s ‘frugality’ in practising silence as a means of regulating self-control. Thus, the self-sufficiency we are talking of here is again that which can be read acceptably in terms of self-control.

We need to consider, therefore, how and why Sheridan dismantles the Edenic Arnold community (following in the footsteps of Sarah Fielding in the *David Simple* narratives before her). Despite living irreproachably ‘with the utmost oeconomy’ (280), Sidney’s economic props are gradually removed from her. This begins with the death of Lord V – and the consequent termination of financial support for Arnold, but more crucially, the community is ruptured from within by the death of Arnold himself, now literally broken in a fall from his horse. At the same time – and inaugurating Sidney’s widowhood – Sheridan also breaks the community represented by the journal, re-introducing the static economy of silence in Sidney’s ever-regressing retreat in narrative position. The details of Arnold’s injury and subsequent death are told not by Sidney, but first by Patty Main, then by Mr Main, her brother. The authority of the speaking voice in the personal economy’s self-representation is thus silenced. Previous ‘absences’ have occurred only during a period of illness and when, according to Cecilia’s annotation, ‘nothing material to her story occurred’ (116). We are also accustomed by now to the idea that the journal provides an autonomous space for expressing thoughts and insights that are not articulated elsewhere. In view of this, the present silence is striking, the more so because of the distancing techniques with which

Sheridan surrounds it. The effect of these is to achieve a near-apotheotic representation of Sidney's transition to widowhood, and we might ask ourselves why Sheridan has sought to present this sexual and economic shift in a way which, given the unique status of the widow in eighteenth-century constructions of women, as Frances Brooke's depiction of Anne Wilmot showed in the previous chapter, significantly problematizes the implementation of Sidney's economic self-sufficiency.

In part, of course, the figurative elevation of Sidney into tragic heroine, inarticulate through grief, heightens the novel's reading of sentimental distress. Patty begins by describing Sidney as sitting 'like a stone statue' (284) by Arnold's bedside before finding herself increasingly reminded of a painting she once saw, 'the picture of despair' (285). Mr Main takes up the narrative responsibility and introduces a new frame of iconography. His emphasis, indeed, is always on what Sidney 'looked like': 'She looked like something more than human!' (287) and, in the final interval before Arnold's death 'like an angel interceding for us poor mortal sinners' (287). Main's contribution is brief – in addition to beatifying Sidney, it records Arnold's death – but its placement is significant in allocating Sidney's passage to widowhood to a masculine voice. Sidney's journalistic silence is thus equated with a dependence on the male to authorize her experience, but it occurs as she achieves the moral and economic self-sufficiency of the widow. This allows Sheridan to suggest the vulnerability of women, educated for domestic life, when they first encounter the wider economy.

In her first phase as a widow, Sidney's economic difficulties are increasingly intensified and Sheridan is at her most explicit in dealing with the theme of money. Sidney recognizes that she faces poverty when Lady Bidulph

should die. Contextualizing this prospect in terms of moral integrity, she remarks, 'I will not call myself poor while I have an upright heart to support me', nor, she continues, while she has the 'means, poor and despicable as they are, of sustaining life' (297). This perpetuates the conceit of the self-sufficient and frugal moral and economic interdependence structured by the Arnolds at Sidney Castle in their 'second' marriage. Yet, Sheridan now insists that Sidney experience an economic dynamic, albeit in distress, that counteracts earlier stasis and implements a more autonomous experience of self-sufficiency.

One aspect of this process concerns the representation of widows in the novel. If Sidney is in a moral continuum of mother-daughter with Lady Bidulph, then her emergence into a shared widowhood has inevitable implications for that continuum. If nothing else, it juxtaposes the ideal of filial obedience with the access Sidney now has to the same self-sufficient status Lady Bidulph exercises. In a more ironic sense, however, the following of Lady Bidulph into widowhood can be read as another of Sidney's imitations of her mother as required by the exigencies of mother-daughter educational modelling. Sheridan's earlier depiction of Lady Grimston's severely wielded and self-willed autonomy and her relationship with her daughter, the also widowed Mrs Vere, would seem to be a comment on this, suggesting as it does that such replication is a concomitant of personal distress. The daughter's predicament in observing the moral and economic curriculum laid down for her is thus metaphorically represented in terms of the widow's grief. It is significant then that Sheridan includes at this moment the death of Lady Bidulph, for it is a kind of additional *widowing* for Sidney; and one which forces her to bridge distress and economy.

By this point Lady Grimston is already dead, neglected on her death-bed and bequeathing her fortune so as to leave ‘not a sixpence to either of her daughters’ (279). Lady Bidulph, on the other hand, is sincerely mourned, but has ‘no other legacy to leave you but a parent’s blessing’ (331). Sidney is forced to become economically self-reliant, but this is structured in a way that demonstrates Sheridan’s commitment to presenting a different version of the widow’s self-sufficiency. Rather than enjoying the freedom to regulate her own financial behaviour as she chooses (as Anne Wilmot did), Sidney finds herself ‘poor and destitute’ (329). Her initial plan is, once more, retreat – ‘to settle me in my new scheme of oeconomy in the country’ (345) – to re-enact, in effect, her frugal retirement with Arnold. However, the illness of her daughters, soon to be followed by her own, reduces her to ‘a single guinea’ (346) and her only option is to earn money by her needle. Her self-sufficiency takes the form of securing an income by this ‘ingenious and honest industry’ (347), while the register of her journal expands to accommodate references to guineas, shillings and farthings. Lady Bidulph’s dying bequest of ‘a parent’s blessing’ might thus be said to encompass the fact that Sidney is ‘pretty dexterous at my needle’ (356), a skill presumably imparted from mother to daughter. This places Sidney’s self-sufficiency in the context of an instructional agenda in specifically nuanced ways.

We saw earlier how needlework was a staple of girls’ education in the eighteenth century. For the poorer sorts, the emphasis fell on practical and income-producing skills such as spinning, knitting and sewing. For those not expected to earn their living, the needle was reserved for the domestic space and, although it might contribute to the household economy, was essentially an ornamental accomplishment and antidote to idleness and boredom. Sidney’s respect for this

pastime is expressed in her noting of Lady V – as ‘an admirable mistress of her needle’ in whose house ‘every room [...] exhibits some production of a very fine genius’ of ‘inimitable skill’ and ‘excellent taste’ (124). This explicit identification of the skill with the household space is reinforced in Sidney’s adjacent remark concerning Mrs Gerrarde, ‘who is not very fond of needle-work’, being ‘fonder of cards’ (124). By thus aligning needlework with taste, industry and domestic sobriety rather than unregulated conduct and dissipation, it becomes an ideal manifestation of the kind of female behaviour associated with self-control.

Sheridan, however, has already prepared us for the tensions present in such a reading. Mrs Gerrarde may be unable to ‘endure people who are always poring over a frame’ (124), but even Sidney herself has been accused of neglect in this regard. In one of the novel’s most frequently cited scenes, Arnold finds Sidney reading and, ‘pointing to a little piece of embroidery that lay in a frame before me’, he asks, ‘do you prefer [reading] to the agreeable entertainment of finishing this beautiful rose here, that seems to blush at your neglect of it?’ (80). Sidney is ‘nettled’, considering herself ‘as innocently, and as usefully employed’ (80). But the crux of Arnold’s response lies not so much with Sidney’s choice of pastime as with *what* she is reading. The complacency of his query as to ‘my studies’ is shaken when he hears the book ‘happened to be Horace’. Not only that but he ‘started’ to find she is reading it in Latin (80). Sheridan here draws attention to how female learning could be perceived as a potentially transgressive superfluity of resources. Arnold’s desire that Sidney prefer the ‘agreeable entertainment’ of the needle attempts to counter the superfluity by instituting its containment within the practices of self-control. It is no accident that Arnold uses this moment to solicit Sidney’s hand. Just as the embroidered rose ‘seems to blush’ in its frame, Sidney, who has

‘coloured’ at Arnold’s response to her understanding Latin, must ^{herself} be framed in the economy of ideal self-control in marriage.

It is intriguing, then, to find Sheridan recurring to this scene later in the narrative, at the point when Sidney realizes she must depend on her own resources to earn money. The rose, ‘the same which I remember my poor Mr Arnold accused me of neglecting for my Horace’ re-appears as ‘a small fire-skreen [*sic*]’ and proves of sufficient quality for a dealer in embroidery to ‘give any price for such a hand’ (356). Sidney’s recollection of how the rose was ‘wrought’ ‘when I was a girl’ (356) accentuates her economic plight now she is a widow. At the same time Sheridan is able to actualize in this one moment not only the range of Sidney’s economic career as girl, wife and widow, but also how a different form of self-sufficiency can be part of female experience. The fact that, in an educational context, Sidney’s ability with the needle proves more useful than her ability to read Horace in Latin is not the point; neither is the fact that her means to present economic self-sufficiency has arisen from the practices of ideal domestic economy. Rather, Sheridan suggests that Sidney’s struggle for individual self-reliance is all the more noteworthy for taking place amidst the conventions of the feminine ideal and the collective values this structures.

If the re-figuring of the widow – and the degree of moral and economic self-sufficiency allowed her – into an emblem of autonomous industry operates as Sheridan’s rebuke to the economic behaviour embodied in education and conduct literature, then the final stages of the novel reveal how tenacious the inculcation of that behaviour is. Sidney has barely time to implement her scheme of economic self-dependence when a long-lost relation, Mr Warner, re-appears from the West Indies and bestows a fortune on her. His riches are ‘inexhaustible’ (379) and

Sheridan makes much of the luxury and style in which Sidney is now set up at his insistence. Sidney, however, practises taste in the way she regulates this and, more particularly, makes ‘noble and pious use’ (419) of her wealth, assisting the unfortunate and observing the laws of charity and benevolence. There is a significant emphasis to her gratitude when this ‘amazing turn of fortune!’ (364) occurs, for she remarks to Cecilia how she thanks God who ‘defendeth the cause of the widow!’ (364). The defending she means is, presumably, from the ‘stings of poverty’, but there is an additional suggestion that she also means from the difficulties of the kind of economic self-sufficiency not recognized by her educational values.

This theme, which, as we shall see, was taken up by Frances Burney in her complex and explicit exploration of female self-dependence, operates in Sheridan’s novel at a more *implicit* level. Sidney’s restoration to a life which can be regulated according to practices belonging to the ‘admirable economist’ is celebrated by her when she tells Cecilia, ‘What a fine thing it is, my dear, to be independent!’ (379). She evidently does not recognize her period of financial self-reliance in terms of independence, but nor does she see her present ‘independent’ state as contingent on her indebtedness to men, not even when she gets Mr Warner to ‘bespeak a set of jewels to the amount of fifteen hundred pounds’ (379)^{with} which she intends to offset her debt to Faulkland. If we recall Gillian Skinner’s reading of a feminine independence formulated as self-control, it is possible to see here how such a correlation works. Sidney’s regulation of Warner’s money in the constituting of a new household and in overseeing acts of charity structures the conduct book agenda of economic practices, including the regulation of the personal economy, associated

with self-control. This is what Sidney understands as independence, not the self-sufficiency she required outside the framework this agenda denotes.

Sheridan's aim here is to critique the practices that produce this monolithic perception. As the novel reaches its climax, she dramatizes her critique by bringing together the moral and the financial in representing the workings of the individual's personal economy. By positioning Sidney between the masculine figures of Warner, Faulkland and Sir George, each persuading her that her moral responsibility lies in consenting to marry Faulkland, Sheridan exposes any prospect of moral and economic autonomy to the pressure of collective values. Sidney responds with a retrospective of 'my duties', identifying, first, 'obedience to my mother', then 'justice to the woman I thought injured, reverence to the memory of my husband' and 'the respect due to my own character' (438). Characteristically placing herself last, she also calls up her powers of self-control, 'to fortify my mind against the important event' (447). But, if this manifestation of self-control is also a rendering of independence (or self-sufficiency), it is an invalid one, for the marriage proves bigamous; it has no moral or economic reality. In view of this, it is interesting to read the report of Sidney's words on the final page of the novel that 'if wealth had not accompanied my hand, the world could not have persuaded me to yield it to Mr Faulkland' (467). This indicates that what rendered her 'independent' has also proved the instrument of 'divine vengeance' (455) and this reinscribes the defence of 'the cause of the widow'. It is this, finally, which expresses Sheridan's sense of how the individual can be morally and economically compromised by the values and processes of her education.

But Sheridan did not leave it there. Six years later she published an additional two volumes of Sidney's story in *Conclusion of the Memoirs of Miss*

Sidney Bidulph (1767). They develop the themes of the initial volumes and examine the repercussions of female education and of the place of obedience in the mother-daughter relationship in the next generation. It is worth remembering that Sidney's first response when Mr Warner offered her economic 'emancipation' was to enjoy 'the delightful prospect of giving my children an education suitable to their birth' (365). The *Conclusion* reveals the outcomes of this. I propose in the next, and final, section of this chapter to address these outcomes, but my remarks are intended less as a detailed analysis of the *Conclusion* than as themselves a conclusion to ideas raised in the chapter as a whole.

Conclusion: *Conclusion of the Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*

The additional two volumes of Sheridan's *Sidney Bidulph* narrative have received little critical attention, with only Doody offering anything like a sustained reading. Her essay focuses on 'the reiterated presence of the past' which 'sets up psychological patterns' expressing a feminine insight into powerlessness, helplessness and 'the hardship involved in encountering the outside world with moral ideals'.⁷³ However, there is another dimension to those 'psychological patterns' in the idea of heredity they convey, a heredity which might also be seen as distinctively feminine in its metaphorical construction. Whilst remaining steadfast to her themes of obedience and how the individual is to effect moral choice in an atmosphere of familial or collective morality, Sheridan also seeks additional ways to emphasize the female heredity of cultural reproduction in education, with the mother-daughter bond the principal mechanism of transmission. There is, for

⁷³ Doody, *Fetter'd or Free?*, pages 350 and 356 respectively.

example, a new impetus to explore how exactly the modes of a girl's education work to produce specific forms of behaviour. By understanding this process, she is saying, *and* how personal and moral economies are regulated as part of it, it is possible to implement a necessary reappraisal of female instructional procedures.

The *Conclusion of the Memoirs* tells the story of Sidney's two daughters by Arnold, Dolly (Dorothea) and Cecilia, and of Falkland's illegitimate son by Miss Burchell, who Sidney has brought up, having 'inculcated early amongst them' (I.20) the idea that he should be thought of as their brother.⁷⁴ The plot traces the intricate interactions and entanglements of these three characters, now young adults, as Falkland [*sic*] (the spelling in this work is different) engages himself first to one, then the other daughter, wreaking emotional havoc amongst the family. His self-excoriating distress and the psychological responses and insights of other characters are depicted in a sequence of letters, for, unlike the earlier volumes, Sheridan here adopts the epistolary format, creating a polyvocal texturing of her narrative. The major new voice in the *Conclusion* is that of Sir Edward Audley, whose determination to marry one of the Arnold girls motivates his unscrupulous manipulation of the weaker Falkland, even to his eliciting his connivance in the abduction of Dolly. Falkland later kills him in a duel, an event which immediately succeeds the novel's sentimental climax, the thwarted union of Falkland and Cecilia. Repeating the device of the interrupted marriage from earlier volumes, Sheridan here pushes the psychological impact to the extreme: the wedding ceremony is already underway when Dolly dramatically intervenes and demands Falkland's hand as her own. Sidney demands of her friend, Cecilia, still the confidant from the earlier work, 'is not this a trial, equal, if not superior to any of

⁷⁴ Frances Sheridan, *Conclusion of the Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*, (London: J. Dodsley, 1767). All references are cited in the text.

those with which my youth was visited?’ (II.261). Her health begins to fail and it is not long before her death is reported, not as ‘the exit of a dying woman; it was the ascension of a blessed spirit to Heaven!’ (II.294). The same letter rather poignantly reminds us that Sidney is still only thirty-eight. The novel ends with the marriage of Cecilia to Lord V – and Dolly’s steadfast refusal of Falkland’s renewed proposals. The Editor omits concluding with any ‘serious reflections’, deciding it is ‘a compliment due to the judgment of his readers to leave them to make reflections for themselves’ (II.327).

The story, one might say, is contrived, but Sheridan’s commitment to earlier themes remains strong. This emerges above all in her working through of the question of filial obedience. Sidney is scrutinized for the appropriateness of the maternal model she provides in this respect and others. Her friend Cecilia wishes, ‘May your prudence, your virtue, your piety be revived and flourish, as well as your beauty does, in the persons of those two lovely girls’ (I.16). Sir George, by contrast, considers Sidney too limited an instructress; the girls need to acquire some knowledge of the world, which he is sure Sidney ‘will never be able to teach them’ (I.25). Meanwhile, the younger men express their frustrations with the maternal model, Falkland commenting, ‘their mother has instilled into them such notions of perfection, that they hardly think themselves mortal women’ (I.93), while Sir Edward Audley even more sardonically observes, ‘Mrs Arnold [...] is not *quite* the pattern that one would choose for young persons to form their manners by’ (I.157). Their concern, naturally, is with the difficulties of achieving emotional and sexual access to the Arnold girls.

However, increasingly as the novel continues, it is the female characters who structure the debate on the nature of female obedience and the maternal model,

making their contributions by deed as well as by word and revealing in their modes of response how the influence of education manifests itself in the construction of psychological experiences and events. Dolly, for example, is the closest temperamentally and psychologically to the young Sidney. Miss Audley considers her too ‘much bigotted to her duty, to venture on disposing of herself without her mother’s consent’ (I.65) and Dolly herself thinks ‘ ’twere better I were in my grave’ (I.135) than that she should confound family expectations by admitting a preference for Falkland. The psychological similarity does not alter even when her conduct departs from Sidney’s paradigmatic obedience: Dolly feels she has ‘burst the bonds of filial duty [...] of gratitude to the best of mothers!’ (I.176) when she agrees she will marry no-one but Falkland. It is a violent image, which prepares for the pathologizing of her conflicting need to replicate and deny the maternal model in her subsequent loss of reason and language.

Cecilia, on the other hand, considers her mother to have ‘made too great a sacrifice to duty’ (I.137) in giving up Faulkland in the previous generation and blames ‘her grand-mama Bidulph’s scruples’ (I.137) in this respect. In one sense this rejects the family history of filial obedience – and Cecilia uses her knowledge of the history to tell Sidney ‘I am sure you will never constrain your own poor Cecilia’ (I.188) – but, at the same time, Cecilia’s psychological modelling of Sidney, like Dolly, as ‘the best of mothers’ (I.280) replicates Sidney’s filial construction of Lady Bidulph and re-institutes an heredity of mother-daughter imitation. Furthermore, although Cecilia rhetorically ponders, ‘why am not *I* more like her?’ (I.312), she also promises her mother that she ‘will never transgress the duty I owe you’ (II.19). This reaches a telling conclusion in Cecilia’s promise at her mother’s death-bed that she has given up any preference for Falkland and will

accept the long resisted marriage to Lord V – (the key point around which the whole debate on obedience has been structured). It is telling because, although only moments from death, Sidney at once tabulates the promise in the form of a codicil to her will and Cecilia's obedience is thus officially documented and regulated.

Cecilia's position, poised between the desire to reject family morality on the one hand and a sense of duty to her mother on the other, makes her the most psychologically subtle character in the novel. Although her exploration of her own moral life may remind us of Linda Pollock's suggestion that women were educated to effect role selection, knowing when to question and assert and when to be silent and defer, Cecilia's experience would seem to show an additional awareness of how individual morality can only mean anything when it is unconstrained by familial texturing. Yet, if other characters are convinced that Cecilia's (and Dolly's) conduct is the manifestation of an education they consider flawed, Sheridan is more concerned with making us understand how the personal economy regulates itself when the processes of education shape individual resources to a collective pattern.

Sidney's role as maternal educator comes to the forefront here. Over a number of letters in the *Conclusion*, she offers a commentary on the education she has given her daughters. If not a manifesto, it nevertheless attempts to conceptualize the nature, motives and shaping influences of that education. There has been, it becomes clear, a conscious shift away from the precepts taught by Lady Bidulph. Sidney's insistence, spatially and temporally patterned throughout the text, that 'I was never accounted inflexible' (I.33), that she has no desire to 'constrain' her children (I.190), that 'The *authority* of a parent I never will exert' (I.209-10) and that 'I *cannot* exercise the rigours of authority' (I.307) testifies to her rejection of her own mother's procedures. Although still describing Lady Bidulph as 'my ever

honoured mother' (I.191), she tells her daughter Cecilia how she was 'constrained [...] to yield up my nearest wishes, and, as it were, mold [*sic*] my heart to the will of her to whom I thought I owed all duty' (I.191). The feelingly ambiguous 'I thought' says much and suggests why she decided to throw away that 'mold' in bringing up her own children.

If, however, Sidney prefers to locate the authority for moral choice in the individual, she remains acutely conscious of the need to support the viability of this as an educational alternative. Sheridan's intriguing response to this is to incarnate Sidney as the maternal author of conduct book advice to her daughters, along the lines of a Pennington or Chapone.⁷⁵ It is in vocabulary, tone and register that the echoes emerge and it seems significant that these should operate simultaneously with the rejection of parental authority as a directive strategy. Rather than this, Sidney avers, she will use 'remonstrance, advice, and admonition' (I.210); and it is advice above all that she recurs to. 'I will advise as a friend' (I.307) she writes at one point, and she tells Cecilia, '*Advice* from a mother was always considered by me as a *command*: yet I do not desire you to regard it in so severe a light' (I.190). The mother-daughter relationship this structures aligns ^{itself} with a maternal position such as Pennington's to pass on 'Advice with regard to your Conduct in Life' (9) and a filial ^{position} such as Sophia's (the daughter-addressee of *The Polite Lady*), whose respect for her mother's guidance melds with the sense of duty ^{elicited by} 'the obligations you are daily laying upon me' (Letter XIII, 32) elicits.

Yet, in instructing her daughter in what light to regard the advice she is offering, Sidney makes the important point that 'We have been educated differently' (I.190). Her clear implication is that different modes of education

⁷⁵ Frances Burney was to use a similar strategy in her inclusion of conduct book issues in her novels, the most explicit example perhaps being Mr Tyrold's letter to his daughter in ^{Volume III,} Book V, Chapter V (entitled 'A Sermon').

produce different forms of behaviour – indeed the novel’s causal arrangements turn on this very point. Less clear, given the tensions and confusions surrounding the daughters’ roles, is whether Sidney has succeeded any better than her own mother in managing the educational model. Using the veiled structuring of conduct book characteristics, Sheridan invites us to consider whether, as Sidney suggests, being ‘educated differently’ is the point, or whether it is not more germane to explore a distinction between a shared procedural impetus to inculcate, instil and ‘mold’ regardless of what the educational differences might be and the nature of the educational dynamic itself. When Falkland says of Sidney, ‘Mrs. Arnold lives not to herself, she has ever been a slave to the capricious will of others’ (I.321), Sheridan encapsulates the unease conveyed throughout the Sidney Bidulph narratives at how the self-sufficiency of the individual is denied when the instructing dynamic produces ^{women} model \wedge unwilling or unable to exercise autonomy. That Sidney ‘lives not to herself’ enacts the conduct book agenda which seeks to contain young women’s instructional experience within a moral economy that operates to eliminate tensions between itself and the personal economies of those it inducts. It is Sheridan’s intention, both in the *Memoirs* and in the *Conclusion*, not to *eliminate* those tensions, but to render them as highly visible as possible.

As part of this intention, the *Conclusion*, like the earlier volumes, sustains a dynamic of placing moral and economic issues alongside one another. This is immediately apparent from the Editor’s introduction in which the youngest daughter of Patty Main is sought out as the holder of the remaining portion of Sidney’s story. Mrs Askham is the keeper of a haberdasher’s shop, ‘who seemed with great industry to apply herself to a little calling for the subsistence [*sic*] of her family’ (I.4). This, and the ensuing observation that ‘her education had qualified her

to appear in a much better sphere' (I.4), echoes the period of Sidney's financial predicament in the previous narrative and brings that aspect of her experience into the preliminary construction of *this* volume. The effect is developed through references to Mr Warner, now dead, the financial security he has bequeathed Sidney and the independent fortunes of twenty thousand pounds he has left to each of her daughters. *That* money, not surprisingly, becomes a propelling force in the plot as Sir Edward Audley marks out the Arnold girls (either) as prospective brides. His sister sees no reason why 'young ladies, whose fortunes render them independent, should not please themselves in the choice of husbands' (I.67-8). Her comment situates the moral debate over the individual's structuring of independence and obedience in distinctly economic terms. The atmosphere of money is thus woven into the texture of the narrative, but its regulation is positioned differently according to the moral emphasis of individual characters and concerns.

From the female novelist's point of view, the rendering of money in sentimental discourse is an essential strategy. Skinner amply demonstrates this in *Sensibility and Economics in the Novel*. As part of her discussion, Skinner also identifies 'a familiar feature' of eighteenth-century novels as being the 'fantasy of economic self-sufficiency'.⁷⁶ We might consider here in what sense she uses the word 'fantasy' and whether the authors (male and female) who made it into 'a familiar feature' understood it to be such. Skinner's specific citation is of Charles Lloyd's novel *Edmund Oliver*, published in 1798, but she uses Sarah Fielding's *History of Ophelia* and Frances Brooke's *Lady Julia Mandeville* as further examples of the 'fantasy of economic self-sufficiency'. In the former, the reference is to the rural idyll in which Ophelia is brought up, in the latter to the Eden-like

⁷⁶ Skinner, p.175.

Belmont estate. It is their respective attempts to structure alternatives to the market economy of the commercial world, either in the imaginative regulation of an alternative system of values or in the form itself, that designate them as fantasies. The term thus stands, not as a utopian defiance of vulnerability – although economic self-sufficiency is often depicted as vulnerable – but as a strategic modelling of real form and substance, whose dynamic was being used to address how the individual's moral and economic identity was implicated when placed within broader systems.

To Skinner's examples we could add other works by Sarah Fielding, the depiction of the 'happy society' in the David Simple narratives, *The Governess*, and Sarah Scott's novel *Millenium Hall*. These works' emphasis on community directly addresses that positioning of the individual in relation to collective systems of values. In their separate ways they show that the individualism associated with self-sufficiency is not inimical to the idea of community. At the same time they link the dynamic of the communities' economic structures with the dynamic of educational processes to produce a set of crucial readings of how the individual's personal economy is implicated in the taught procedures of economic (self-) regulation. For, to sustain a practice adopted throughout this discussion, by deploying the term 'economy' in its broadest metaphorical sense, taking on its personal and moral as well as its domestic and monetary applications, Skinner's reference to the 'fantasy of economic self-sufficiency' acquires a whole range of additional resonances.

When Hester Chapone writes of 'Oeconomy' that it is an 'art' as well as a 'virtue' and 'so important a part of a woman's character' as to take 'its rank next to the first duties of life' (147), her words, implying as they do that 'oeconomy' *is* woman, suggest how instructional discourse constructed a 'fantasy' of economic

behaviour centred on frugality in regulating the domestic space *and* in regulating the self. This ‘fantasy’ of self-control, which, as I have demonstrated, can also be designated as the acceptable face of self-sufficiency, is both an ideal and, as structured by the education dynamic, a desirable and attainable one. The epithet attributed to Sheridan’s Sidney Bidulph, that she is ‘an admirable oeconomist’ is evidence of this attainability. Yet we need to be aware of how Sheridan surrounds Sidney’s attainment with other evidence, in the form of ‘economic’ disruption, which separates the personal from the moral, the domestic from the financial and exposes the conflictual tensions behind the conduct discourse ‘fantasy’, which relies on the collective integration of regulatory procedures to produce its ‘self-sufficiency’.

It is perhaps no accident that Sheridan completes her Sidney Bidulph narratives with the motif of the autonomous reader. This replaces the image of the maternal instructress which concluded the *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* and which is reiterated in the opening section of the *Conclusion*’s framing narrative where we are told how Patty Main preserved the ensuing letters ‘to leave the whole as a useful lesson to her children’ (I.6). The ending explicitly suppresses Mrs Askham’s ‘serious reflections’ on this ‘useful lesson’, ‘extremely pious and rational’ though they are said to be. Instead, the Editor – and Sheridan – thinks it ‘a compliment due to the judgment of his readers to leave them to make reflections for themselves’ (II.327). This stands as Sheridan’s alternative version of self-sufficiency, whereby the instructional impulse to model the individual’s responses (in a range of behaviours and practices) is rejected and the viability of autonomous moral choice is asserted in its place.

Chapter Four

Work and Self-dependence: The Novels of Frances Burney

Frances Burney's first novel, *Evelina*, published in 1778, is also concerned with the question of female education. Appearing seventeen years after Sheridan's *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* – coincidentally the very age of Burney's heroine – *Evelina* might be said to operate as the offspring in a mother-daughter dynamic which continues the debate on female education and conduct, but does so in its own distinctive character. More usefully, *Evelina* can be placed in relation to a 'sibling' rather than a 'parent': Frances Brooke's *The Excursion*, published the year before *Evelina*, shares with the latter the structure of a heroine journeying into the world beyond the domestic setting, a rite of passage summed up in the subtitle of Burney's novel: *The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*.¹ The 'excursion' or 'entrance' involves the testing and perfecting of the heroine's education, which has thus far proved adequate in theory, but limited as to experience and application. These novels proceed by a set of recognizable devices: the heroine, modest, chaste and possessed of the appropriate delicacy, finds herself frighteningly exposed in the world of public sociability. Her tendency to inadvertently place herself in questionable situations, together with her inexperienced handling of the technologies of sociability, sexuality and economics conspire to keep her in a state of heightened anxiety and embarrassment. The novels reach closure only when the hero shows sufficient discrimination to winnow her innate qualities from unfortunate appearances and marry her.²

¹ The edition used is *Evelina*, edited by Edward Bloom and Lillian Bloom (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press (World's Classics), 1982). All references are to this edition and are cited in the text.

² See Chapter One, note 55 for how this was a well-established structure in the eighteenth-century novel.

Such devices carry out a vital purpose, but they are there to serve rather than to implement the wider ideological issues with which the novels are concerned. In *The Excursion*, Brooke employs an ironic register to play with sentimental conventions, reformulating the established practice of besetting the heroine with real, imagined or threatened scenes of social exposure into an exacting scrutiny of the moral and economic value systems that surround her; the mechanisms of exposure thus becoming exposed in their turn. Brooke also does some interesting things with her heroine, Maria Villiers, showing her as confident, optimistic and ambitious, and equipping her with resources beyond those of her education and her natural moral and physical graces, intent on establishing herself in a literary career. Maria has a very clear idea of what her future life's work is going to be.

The same cannot be said of Burney's Evelina. Beautiful and modest, virtuous and shy – 'artless as purity itself' (20) – Evelina's resources are conspicuously restricted to those she herself constructs and represents. Economically she is 'Destined, in all probability, to possess a very moderate fortune' (18). The resources of her education are appraised with ambivalence; and Burney assiduously complicates Evelina's familial resources. Although she is the daughter and legal heiress of Sir John Belmont, Evelina's claims are unacknowledged. The obscure circumstances surrounding her parents' marriage and her own birth have left her vulnerable to misvaluations and importunities. Whilst the novel is in part a debate about who should have moral, sexual and economic control of Evelina, the confusing of the familial resources available to her also inaugurates a debate about the rights of individual self-determination. Mr Villars, Evelina's guardian, tells her 'you must learn not only to *judge* but to *act* for yourself' (164). But his seeming avocation of individual responsibility sits

ironically with his own distance and ineffectualness; he is both *in loco parentis* and, like Sir John, *in absentia*. This means that for much of the novel Evelina is exposed to the dynamic of alternative familial resources represented by her grandmother, Madame Duval, and her ridiculous cousins, the Branghtons. Even as the plot works its way towards closure, Burney complicates these resources with a father who sees in his daughter ^{the living model of} his dead wife and a half brother who believes himself guilty of an incestuous love for the 'sister', who has usurped Evelina's rightful position.

In this way, although *Evelina* can be described as an archetypal quest narrative in which the heroine journeys towards a secure moral, economic and familial identity, it remains a significantly complicated one. The internal and external resources from which that identity is fashioned are uncertain as to form and authorization; and its ultimate attainment depends on processes of exposure that elsewhere threaten to undermine Evelina altogether. Margaret Doody has noted how the 'power of pain' is a constant element in Burney's novels.³ Evelina experiences this pain as the fear of acting incorrectly and exposing herself to shame and embarrassment. The anxiety is a real one, for modesty and delicacy on the one hand and ignorance of the social forms on the other formulate an equation that does not readily balance up. The resources of Evelina's education to date are tested by the education she is receiving in, and from, the world. However, if what is at stake is the goal of identity itself, and if we remember how eighteenth-century female education was structured in terms of preparing women for future life roles, including work, we need to ask what the nature of Evelina's role is; what is the nature of her *work*?

³ Margaret Anne Doody, *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 204.

The motifs of education are present from the outset of *Evelina*.⁴ In the dedicatory poem, addressed to her father, Burney pays tribute to his educative role, acknowledging his influence in ‘Thy life, my precept – thy good works, my school’ (1). In the ensuing Preface, she wryly suggests that ‘boarding-school damsels’ (8) having an appetite for novels, the responsible author should make sure they ‘may be read, if not with advantage, at least without injury’ (8). Thus the atmospheres of responsibility and obligation are implemented both in the texture and the text of the novel, whose epistolary form foregrounds the (self-) authorizing strategies inherent in acts of reading and writing. Burney also uses the form to show how individuals narrativize self-referential perceptions of their social and cultural representation. Evelina’s accounts of her beleaguered experiences in the social worlds of London and Bristol reflect the simultaneously embattled state of her psyche as it attempts to synthesize her “second” education. Burney’s increasing interest in later works, notably *Cecilia* (1782) and *Camilla* (1796), in the fictional possibilities of the heroine’s collapse into madness shows her concern with the conflicts that were particularly and peculiarly feminine. Evelina’s predicament here emblemizes one such conflict; the collective preoccupation with the signs and meanings of her education versus her own individual attempt to discern the pragmatics of how that education can be made to work in practice.

Like Ophelia, Julia Mandeville, Sidney Bidulph and Maria Villiers, Evelina’s education has been a private one. Mr Villars, who appears to have been her ^{influential} ~~most~~ teacher, tells Lady Howard that his ward’s ‘education, however short of my wishes, almost exceeds my abilities’ (13). He later describes it to have been ‘the best I could bestow in this retired place’ (19). The exact content of his educational

⁴ Julia Epstein calls it ‘a feminist novel of education’. Julia Epstein, *The Iron Pen: Frances Burney and the Politics of Women’s Writing* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1989) p.95.

plan is never commented upon, which allows Burney to float the ambiguous presence of implied omissions and failures behind his claims. Mr Villars' concern is to validate his own role and position. Telling Lady Howard that he has done the best he could in difficult circumstances suggests the self-justification of the inadequate, as does describing Evelina as 'quite a little rustic' and declaring 'I shall not be surprised if you should discover in her a thousand deficiencies of which I have never dreamt' (19). It is a self-serving agenda that emerges; a desire, perhaps unconscious, to confine her education to the parameters of what he wants for her on his own behalf: 'bestowing her on one who may be sensible of her worth, and then sinking to eternal rest in her arms' (15). Clearly the securing of Mr Villars' future comfort features prominently in the role and work for which Evelina has been prepared.

If Mr Villars' track record as a teacher – he was also responsible for educating Evelina's grandfather and mother – fails to establish his credentials, it does allow Burney to raise some important points. First, by removing the female-maternal work of educating children to the male-paternal sphere, Burney can literalize the implications for women of being educated to please men. Not only Mr Villars' embedded desires, but also Lord Orville's pleased pronouncement, towards the book's end, that Evelina "“has been extremely well educated”" (346) illustrate this. What Orville is really saying is that he now recognizes in Evelina those qualities that make it possible for a man of his status to marry her. More intriguingly, given that Mr Villars, by gender, cannot reproduce the educational dynamic by which mothers model the cultural norms for their daughters to replicate, Burney deploys alternative structures of replication. She feminizes Mr Villars so that his passive, apologist stance and insistence on privacy represent some of those

virtues required of women. But she also feminizes Lord Orville so that the two men who hold key positions in Evelina's life and whom she most wishes to please become replicas of each other. The ambiguous allusion to 'the best of men' (406) with which the novel closes suggests this replication, for it could be a reference to either. It is also sustained in their echoing names, Vill-ars becoming Or-ville.

This leads us to the second important point Burney raises in her treatment of the education theme. By reformulating the replication model in the Villars-Orville dynamic of the eighteenth-century feminized man (the 'man of feeling'⁵), Burney integrates this theme with the romance plot, which is metaphorically represented in the journey away from Villars at the beginning and back to him, with his replica, Orville, at the end. If Evelina's part in this process has been to match the taught precepts of the one to the matrimonial requirements of the other – at the same time gaining recognition from her real father, whose name is no sooner secured than rejected – then it might be said the goals of her education have been fulfilled. The role and work for which she has been prepared meet in the future domestic responsibilities of Lady Orville. In a variant on the replication theme, the daughter-wife of Villars becomes the wife-daughter of Lord Orville, who she earlier suggested would 'when his youth is flown, his vivacity abated, and his life is devoted to retirement [...] resemble him whom I most love and honour' (72). But Burney's emphasis is not exclusively on these outcomes. In her linking of the education theme with the conventions of the journey plot structure, she activates ways of using the journey's symbolic provision of spaces and suspensions in which new experiences, new selves, new roles can be tested, to reveal her interest in the

⁵ The emergence of this masculine construct is embodied in Henry Mackenzie's 1771 novel *The Man of Feeling* and is linked to the impact of sensibility on moral and social behaviour. For a full account see G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

relationship between education and work.⁶ In Burney's view, women's education is not just about preparation for work (in whatever form), it is closely bound up with the nature of women's work as a whole.

Much of the work Evelina finds herself having to do involves repairing the 'thousand deficiencies' which Mr Villars feared were left in her education. Although Lady Howard praises him for his 'peculiar attention' which has 'formed her mind' to an unequalled degree of excellence' (123), Evelina herself feels her education to be unfinished, declaring there 'ought to be a book, of the laws and customs *à-la-mode*, presented to all young people, upon their first introduction into public company' (83). The deficiencies in question are those concerning the rules of conduct within polite society and in relation to courtship rituals. Evelina knows that the learning of these rules, essential to her social success, must be undertaken without compromising the integrity of her female virtues, and the completion of her education is thus predicated on discerning the relationship between innate and cultivated forms of behaviour. Not only that, it also involves learning how to manipulate the cultivated to make it look spontaneous and natural. Evelina becomes an autodidact in socially constructed forms of behaviour. The work involved in this is psychological in emphasis, as is the quest for identity of which it is part, and its narrativizing in letter form ~~relates~~ to Armstrong's formulation of a new category of women's labour in terms of behaviour and its translation into psychological events.⁷ One of the aims of this present chapter will be to look at how Burney's writings explore this question of women's psychological labour.

⁶ The strategic value women writers found in the literary devices that created such spaces is a reminder of the fictional representation of the figure of the coquette, discussed in Chapter Two.

⁷ See the previous chapter for a discussion of this formulation and its implications for the construction of the domestic woman.

Another aim is to consider how Burney examines the moral and economic implications of women's work *per se*. Looking at *Evelina*, there would appear to be little immediate evidence of a theme that was to develop an increasingly urgent presence in her novels, culminating in the sustained scrutiny of female employment in *The Wanderer* (1814). In her *first* novel allusions to working women are few and far between. There is Madame Duval who once worked as a waiting-girl in a tavern, the prostitutes Evelina encounters in Marybone Gardens and Dame Green, Evelina's erstwhile wet-nurse: these are all examples of the working poor. However, in the social world of *Evelina*, *how* people make their money is simply not an issue: they do not work for it and that is enough. The one exception to this apparently money- and work-blind attitude comes in the form of the Branghtons, who, along with their lodger Mr Smith, are all too aware of the origins and social power of pounds, shillings and pence. Their speculations concerning Sir Clement Willoughby as to what "his business" might be and that it must be "something that brings in a good income" (243) situate their economic concerns in terms of their social station (Mr Branghton is a silversmith by trade). But in satirizing their vulgarity in talking so openly about money and the mistake of supposing Sir Clement might actually *work*, Burney is no less satirizing the attitudes of lords and ladies who squander money because they can, just as they squander time in idle amusements, oblivious to the realities of work and productivity.

A number of critics have addressed the theme of money in Burney's work. Edward Copeland in his 1976 article 'Money in the Novels of Fanny Burney' *claims to have discovered* that this was a significant theme in the late-eighteenth-

century female novel.⁸ His reading remains important, but in confining itself to money-plot workings is rather limited in scope. Judith Lowder Newton's commentary on *Evelina* in *Women, Power and Subversion* (1985) suggests that, in confining consciousness of money to the lower orders, Burney 'simply omits' a vision of the economic conditions surrounding genteel women like *Evelina*.⁹ Again, this is too limited an account as is demonstrated by more recent, more thoroughly historicized readings, which suggest Burney's real and significant engagement with the debates surrounding England's economic transformation and the impact (on women) of capitalism's credit and commerce principles.¹⁰ The focus here remains consistently on how women are affected by such financial structures and, even if the theme of money is demonstrably present in *Evelina*, it is still unclear that Burney was yet engaged with the idea of women participating in economic life by means of work. However, a brief survey of Kristina Straub's discussion of *Evelina* will show that female work is indeed a presence in this first novel, if not in terms of practical job descriptions, then in the sense of its ambiguities and ideological implications for middle-class women.¹¹

⁸ Edward W. Copeland 'Money in the Novels of Fanny Burney' in *Studies in the Novel*, Volume 8, No. 1, Spring '1976, pp.24-37. He sees the emergence of money as the *subject* of female-authored literature as the new fiction's defining factor and suggests the previous lack of critical awareness of this point is due to the incidence of fantasy in this fiction, p.25.

⁹ Judith Lowder Newton, *Women, Power, and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction, 1778-1860* (New York; London: Methuen, 1985), p.30. Newton argues that Burney's strategy is to mystify the reality of economic conditions in order to give weight to the consolations of marriage in an ideology that positions genteel women as 'treasure', p.33. However, veiling economic reality does not remove it and the very fact that Newton is able to sustain her argument shows the novel's engagement with economic issues. (See Newton, 'Evelina', pp.23-54.) See also James Thompson in *Models of Value*, where he suggests 'Evelina resists economic knowledge', p.159. He takes this resistance at face value as evidence of *Evelina*'s remaining firmly in the discourse of domesticity. In a different vein, but also of interest, is Catherine Gallagher's placing of the writing of *Evelina* in the context of the Burney family's economic circumstances. See *Nobody's Story*, p.205.

¹⁰ Most notable amongst these is Barbara Zonitch's account in *Familiar Violence: Gender and Social Upheaval in the Novels of Frances Burney* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1997). Her feminist reading seeks to locate the forms of violence uncovered in Burney's work within an historically contextualized treatment of a late-eighteenth-century aristocratic-bourgeois power struggle.

¹¹ Kristina Straub, *Divided Fictions: Fanny Burney and Feminine Strategy* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1987).

Straub's reading in *Divided Fictions* (1987) returns us, first, to the curriculum and purposes of female education. The skills with which women were equipped enabled them to fulfil their domestic responsibilities – their work within the household – and also gave them resources for passing their leisure hours usefully. Straub points out that the ideological value placed on women's work was predicated on ambiguity: 'are the occupations of middle-class women valuable as "work" remunerated only by the vague (and often tenuous) return of "support"? Or are they valuable as the outward manifestations of the middle-class male's economic status?'¹² Either way, they are economically contingent. Add to this the kind of pleasurable pastimes with which the pages of *Evelina* are filled – the trips to the theatre, to the opera, to the pleasure-gardens – and the situation becomes more complex. In Straub's formulation, a single genteel young woman might be said to be securing her economic position by pursuing such pleasures, for this is part of her work in finding a suitable marriage partner.

Straub argues that the categories of women's work thus become blurred, that the value of work is rendered ambivalent and that women themselves are taught to question its value at the same time as accepting their work roles. The formulation of work in psychological terms is again implicated here. Straub suggests that Burney's treatment of the theme in *Evelina* becomes a psychological strategy for retaining self-respect by establishing 'the female subject within the conventional territory of feminine employment and pastimes while disassociating the subject's worth from that territory'.¹³ This may be a psychological strategy, but it also involves psychological *work*.

¹² Straub, p.80.

¹³ Straub, p.89.

Burney's first novel, then, alerts us to the fact that, in examining the work of genteel women, we cannot assume that that work will always be visible; the work of such women – and its remuneration – operates in a range of different registers: the moral, the psychological, the affective.¹⁴ However, given that the idea of women's paid employment became increasingly visible in Burney's later novels, it is interesting to see the way in which it is represented in another early work, her first play *The Witlings*, written a year after *Evelina* in 1779.¹⁵

The Witlings dramatizes the romantic plot of Cecilia, an orphan and heiress, who is to marry Beaufort, the nephew and heir of Lady Smatter. The 'witlings' are Lady Smatter's coterie of self-regarding 'intellectuals', who vie in wit and literary analysis, but expose their vacuity and vanity: they are intellectual cheats. When news comes that Cecilia's fortune is lost, Lady Smatter orders Beaufort to abandon any thought of marrying her. Misunderstandings in the love plot ensue, but Cecilia's personal integrity and Beaufort's steadfastness allow for their eventual resolution. This comments on the poverty of Lady Smatter's response. Her privileging of social power through the manipulation of money and intellect hierarchizes all relationships into that of patron and dependant. Burney opposes such a stance by her exploration in the play of the theme of self-dependence.

Since one aim of this present chapter is to examine the relationship between self-dependence and female employment, it is fitting that *The Witlings* should open in a milliner's shop, a quintessentially female place of work. Burney does not disguise women's work here; indeed she makes it as visible as it could possibly be,

¹⁴ This is always suggested in the discursive representation of genteel women's work in education and conduct writings. See previous chapter.

¹⁵ For commentaries on the play see in particular Doody, pp.68-98; Barbara Darby, *Frances Burney, Dramatist: Gender, Performance and the Late-Eighteenth-Century Stage* (The University Press of Kentucky, 1997) pp.22-42; and the introduction to *The Witlings*, edited by Clayton J. Delery (East Lansing: Colleagues Press, (1995). This is the edition used here and to which future references are made.

for the employees of Mrs Wheedle's shop are shown working before our very eyes. Doody points this out as unprecedented for the stage of that period.¹⁶ Burney uses the unexpected opening to introduce motifs of productivity and industriousness to set against the pointless time-wasting of characters such as Jack and the moral moribundity of Lady Smatter. More importantly, the setting provides a subliminal backdrop to the predicament of how Cecilia is to support herself after her 'ruin'. for, as Lady Smatter says, 'She has been brought up to nothing, – if she can make a Cap, 'tis as much as she can do' (II,66). Employment in a milliner's shop may be one of the few options open to her, as it is to be for Juliet in *The Wanderer*.¹⁷ Indeed, *The Wiltlings* presages Burney's last novel in more telling ways than those who see *The Wanderer* primarily as a reworking of *Evelina* have recognized.¹⁸ One only has to hear Cecilia's speech when she decides to leave Lady Smatter's house to see this:

I will quit your inhospitable Roof, I will seek shelter –alas where? – without fortune, destitute of Friends, ruined in circumstances, yet proud of Heart, – where can the poor Cecilia seek shelter, peace or protection? (II, 69)

Another factor that places Cecilia in a continuum with Juliet is the discovery both women make that in seeking self-sufficiency they risk exposing themselves to dependency and degradation. Vacillating on the brink of becoming a lady's companion, Cecilia laments, 'Alas, to what abject dependance [*sic*] may I have exposed myself!' (V, 132) and Juliet later finds that being a "humble companion" (477) is 'sordid'; 'not only distressing, but oppressive; not merely cruel, but

¹⁶ See Doody, pp.77-79.

¹⁷ The implications of working in a milliner's shop and the eroticizing of it as a place of female work emerge fully in *The Wanderer*, and are discussed later in the chapter.

¹⁸ James Thompson and Barbara Zonitch are amongst those critics who have read *The Wanderer* as a re-working of *Evelina*

degrading' (488).¹⁹ Yet, unlike Juliet, Cecilia never actually has to enact any of her plans; they are incipient horrors and difficulties rather than the real ones they become for Juliet.²⁰ Furthermore it is a *male* character, Beaufort, who fully and explicitly articulates the merits of self-dependence in *The Witlings* and so becomes the first spokesperson for the concept in Burney's work as a whole. He identifies self-dependence as 'the first of Earthly Blessings' (V, 155), preferable far to the 'misery of Dependence' (III, 78) that Lady Smatter exacts from him. However, in musing on the happiness of 'Those who to their own industry owe their subsistence' (III, 80), and in construing 'the heaviest toil' and 'the hardest labour' as nothing to 'the corroding servility' (III, 78-9) of dependency and degradation to which Cecilia is exposed in seeking to support herself by work, Burney must have recognized this conceptualizing of self-dependence as incomplete, for she embodies it in the very structure of the play: just as Cecilia avoids her 'fate', so Beaufort is never called upon to put his valorizing of self-dependence to the test. It is Juliet again who both invokes self-dependence (as 'ever cheering to an upright mind' (*The Wanderer*, 220)) and experiences what it means in practice. Thus, between early and late Burney, a process of actualizing the female employment difficulties Cecilia only nearly encounters and of shifting the conceptualizing of self-dependence from a male to a female register has occurred. Another question this chapter aims to address is how such a development became possible and why Burney felt it to be necessary.

¹⁹ The edition used is *The Wanderer* edited by Margaret Anne Doody, Robert L. Mack and Peter Sabor (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press (World's Classics), 1991). All references are to this edition and are cited in the text.

²⁰ Mona Scheuermann points out in *Her Bread to Earn* that rarely is a woman of the upper levels of society pictured as working in the eighteenth-century novel. (And the same can be said of drama.) Women who *are* shown working are invariably servants or from the labouring classes. See p.9.

We also need to consider here exactly what it is that self-dependence means. More particularly, given that self-sufficiency had a different usage in the eighteenth century, it will prove instructive to examine whether self-dependence was the modern self-sufficiency's eighteenth-century equivalent. *The Witlings*, in fact, plays with the meanings of both; quite literally so in the case of self-sufficiency, which is used as the topic that Beaufort's friend, the sardonic Censor, proposes to Dabler for a demonstration of *ex tempore* composition. Censor suggests it is something 'you will find no difficulty to dilate upon' (IV, 112), but has to enforce the meaning: 'Self-sufficiency, – don't you understand me?' (IV, 112). Dabler responds indignantly: 'if you imagine that *I* am self-sufficient, you are most prodigiously mistaken' (IV, 112). Of course this is exactly what Censor does mean and we see self-sufficiency occurring here in its pejorative eighteenth-century formulation. Part of being self-sufficient in the eighteenth-century sense is to be too arrogant to know that you are.²¹ This is set against the play's formulation of self-dependence.

When Beaufort ends the last act of *The Witlings* with his tribute to the value of 'Self-dependence', he describes it as a defence against 'the common vicissitudes of Human Life' and against exposure 'to the partial caprices and infirmities of Human Nature' (V, 155). He has Lady Smatter very much in mind as he warns against relying 'solely on others for support and protection' (V, 155). The difference lies in learning to act and think independently; something the 'witlings' are unable to do. If we take self-dependent, then, to mean dependent only on oneself, we are brought close to our modern usage of self-sufficiency. The missing dimension is concerned with self-sufficiency's emphasis on the ability to supply one's needs from one's own resources. The play illustrates this in the fact that the

²¹ Doody discusses this scene in *The Life in the Works*, p.90. She does not take account of the conceptual shift in the usage of self-sufficiency.

lovers rely on Censor to restore their social and financial status (by restoring Cecilia's fortune and blackmailing Lady Smatter into giving Beaufort her blessing). Beaufort's words are thus spoken from a position which draws specific attention to self-dependence as an idea, a state of mind, operating in a moral dimension, for although he speaks of it as *enactable* and as 'this most useful of all practical precepts' (V, 155), it is noticeable that he no longer places its construction in the register of employment as he did earlier. Again, it is to Burney's later works that we will have to turn to fully pursue the relationship between self-dependence and self-sufficiency.

Finally, *The Witlings* provides one last way of reading for the theme of female work and self-dependence in Burney's earlier writings, for her own productivity in authoring the play, and the female labour and self-dependence this represents, were never realised. The play was suppressed and has never been performed.²² There is no doubt that Burney very much minded this and the fate of *The Witlings* provides a range of motifs which address the concerns of this chapter as a whole. First, there is the question of women's work itself: the kinds of jobs women did in the eighteenth century, where they did them, what the work consisted in and what it contributed to the economies (micro- and macro-) within which the work was undertaken. Second, there is a question of contexts – what was the nature of the social and economic environments in which women's work was positioned? This encompasses the debates amongst social and economic historians concerning the impact and processes of industrialism and capitalism. It is here that we can expect to find ways of reading for the relationship between female self-sufficiency

²² For accounts of how and why this suppression occurred, see Delery's edition of the play, pp. 11-20; Gallagher, *Nobody's Story*, pp. 229-30; Darby, *Frances Burney, Dramatist*, pp. 22-5 and 41-2; and Doody, *The Life in the Works*, pp. 91-8. As Doody points out, 'It is an irony that the dramatist who took as her theme "self-dependence" could not produce her play because her father wouldn't let her', p. 91.

and work, for considering the economic contexts of women's work will show whether those economies were self-sufficient in emphasis. This also implicates the relationship between paid employment and domestic activity, which itself implicates the question of whether women's work was codified in accordance with social class: were certain jobs identified with certain ranks?

A third area this chapter aims to address concerns perceptions and attitudes towards women's work. This will receive particular attention in relation to Burney's writings and will consider how the strict demarcation of the work women were educated to perform along class, gender and moral lines affected attitudes not only to women's work as such, but to the women performing that work. In view of Burney's own experiences of familial (masculine) disapproval and curtailment of her productive labour, the pressure of such attitudes can be expected to be of some significance. Here, too, self-sufficiency will be implicated in terms of women's own claims over their work and their relationship to it.

A fourth and final area of investigation extends this point and asks what women's attitude to their work was. Did a woman regard her work simply as an extension of the educational process, a fulfilment of the role allotted to her? Was it a means of subsistence; a site of conflict, of contentment, or of duty; a necessary evil or a source of pride and self-esteem? In short, what meanings did women themselves attach to their work? This is of particular importance in discussing Burney's novels, both in the context of her own literary career as well as for the ways in which she thematizes, theorizes (and problematizes) women's work. The idea of psychological labour is always there – continuing the procedures of self-regulation and self-control – but her female characters are also consistently preoccupied with living their lives productively and meaningfully within the

dimension of employment as a whole. Understanding the strategies and purposes informing Burney's aims here will cast fresh light on her achievement overall, as it will on the ways in which she formulates self-dependency and self-sufficiency across the span of her writings.

Women and Work in the Eighteenth Century

Bridget Hill proposes four main areas of women's work in the eighteenth century: agriculture, domestic industry, domestic service and as housewives.²³ This raises a number of important issues, starting with the question: did this encompass *all* women or did it apply only to particular classes? Economic, social and demographic changes across the century might also be expected to affect the response to this question. Furthermore, Angela John's suggestion that 'lack of work for a woman' was the 'defining characteristic' of the 'successful late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century family'²⁴ implicates the very definition of 'work' itself. The tendency to see it as waged labour is unhelpful for considering women's work in this period. If it is the case that 'All women began their working lives as daughters', that 'A wife was always a working woman' and that 'the majority of women also engaged in income-producing work during this period', then it is also the case that the forms, purposes, locations and values of women's work resist ready categorization.²⁵ Recent historiography consistently emphasizes this point. The reductive effects of generalizing or homogenizing are written into the debates

²³ Bridget Hill, *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England*.

²⁴ Angela V. John, editor, *Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England 1800-1918* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p.2.

²⁵ Respectively, Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work and Family*, p.32; Robert W. Malcolmson, *Life and Labour in England 1700-1780* (London: Hutchinson, 1981), p.57; Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, p.145.

themselves. Thus, Lindsey Charles and Lorna Duffin (1985) warn against an overdrawn identification between work and home in pre-industrial England, pointing out that women's work was neither necessarily home-based, nor 'linked to their housewifely roles'.²⁶ Hill demonstrates the flexibility of women's labour, both within and outside the home. The money women earned from waged labour could come from a variety of sources. Hill argues women's labour was 'in consequence ill-defined'.²⁷ Pamela Sharpe (1998) also discusses the diversity of women's work and argues 'we need a much broader definition of 'employment' for women than for men'.²⁸ Deborah Simonton (1998) more fully pursues the debates surrounding the gendered division of labour and examines how work is mediated by ideology. She argues that 'The gendered nature of tasks and work is not inherent in the job itself, but in the ideological identification and distribution of tasks'.²⁹ To talk of women's work without also taking into account society's perceptions of the value to be placed on its different forms and activities is therefore incomplete.³⁰

However, to return to Hill's four main areas of female work, there is at least some consensus on the *kinds* of work women did. Taking agriculture first, many labouring women worked on the land in agricultural trades.³¹ Their tasks were largely separate from those of men and included weeding, hoeing and sowing. Much of the work was also seasonal, associated with the harvest and hay-making.

²⁶ Lindsey Charles and Lorna Duffin, editors, *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial England* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 14-15.

²⁷ Hill, p.45.

²⁸ Sharpe, p.26.

²⁹ Deborah Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work: 1700 to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p.82. Shoemaker also engages with the gender implications of women's work roles and the problematic effect on them of economic change. See ^{Shoemaker} in particular Chapter Five, 'Work'.

³⁰ See Simonton's introduction, especially pp. 1-3.

³¹ R.W. Malcolmson suggests that three quarters of the English population lived rurally in the first half of the eighteenth century. See 'Ways of Getting a Living in Eighteenth Century England' in Pahl, *On Work*, pp.48-60. This amply demonstrates the importance of the agrarian economy for male and female labour.

Mary Collier's poem 'The Woman's Labour' (1739) sets this harvest work – 'throwing, turning, making Hay' – alongside household work – 'Our beds we make, our Swine we feed the while'. Work in the fields gives way, not to rest, but to 'domestic Toils', so that when women return home, 'Alas! we find our Work but just begun'.³² This also illustrates the composite nature of women's agricultural work: work on the land blurs with work on the homestead, for most dwellings would probably have some land attached, if only a cottage garden. Women's work here included vegetable growing, tending pigs and poultry, dairy-work, perhaps bee-keeping. And this was aside from work *inside* the house. Thus income from waged agricultural labour is set alongside unwaged work of a similar nature carried out at home. However, the produce of this second kind of labour led to women's involvement in market activity, establishing a different source of income and broadening the scope of their participation in land-based work.³³

Such blurrings and overlappings are also characteristic of Hill's second area of women's work: domestic industry. This included activities such as knitting, spinning and weaving, lace-making, straw-plaiting and glove-making. Such work was carried out either at home or in workshops close by and, as with agriculture, could often merge with women's roles within the household.³⁴ The persistence and diversity of domestic industry – or proto-industrialism as it is called – places it in a complex relationship with the technological advances, mechanization and factory organization associated with full industrialization. More particularly, as will be

³² Mary Collier 'The Woman's Labour: An Epistle to Mr Stephen Duck' (London: J. Roberts, 1739), pp. 8-10.

³³ See Hill's section on 'Women and Agriculture' in *Eighteenth-Century Women: An Anthology* (Allen and Unwin, 1984, 1987 (paperback)), pp. 177-96. Malcolmson is also informative on the nature of rural and agricultural work. See, too, Hudson and Lee, editors, *Women's Work and The Family Economy in Historical Perspective* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 7-10.

³⁴ Hill, *Women, Work and Sexual Politics*, p. 11.

seen, it is implicated in the historiography of women's work in terms of the debates surrounding the separation of home and workplace and whether this worked for or against women's employment opportunities, status and autonomy.

Hill's third area, domestic service, was one of the most common occupations for women in the eighteenth century.³⁵ In the countryside, tasks could be as much based outside the home as within. In both town and country, the work could range from the most menial drudgery (washerwomen for example) to at least some semblance of responsibility (housekeepers). It was a vital area of employment for unmarried women or those with few financial options, since it was thought suitable for those middle-class women who needed employment, for whom possible positions included companion or governess. As Shoemaker points out, these posts were often 'little more than an extension of domestic service'.³⁶ This returns us to the frequent lack of definition in women's work, the more particularly as the distinction between work carried out by domestic servants and that by housewives, Hill's fourth area, is by no means clear.³⁷ Nor are the boundaries of when such work was of use or exchange value. Writing of an earlier period, 1500-1660, Susan Cahn states 'Women were housewives, first and foremost', their 'province' being the 'maintenance of the household'.³⁸ But this could mean many different things in practice, nuancing their 'labour' in significant ways, and, as we have seen, work

³⁵ Patty Seleski indicates that the majority of domestic employees at the start of the eighteenth century were women and that this was consolidated over the course of the century. Furthermore, half of all women employed in London at the end of the century were probably in domestic service. See 'Women, Work and Cultural Change in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century London' in *Popular Culture in England c.1500-1850*, edited Tim Harris (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), pp.144-5.

³⁶ Shoemaker, p.186.

³⁷ For further discussion of domestic service see Hill's section on 'Female Domestic Servants' in *Eighteenth-Century Women: An Anthology*, Part 12.

³⁸ Susan Cahn, *Industry of Devotion: The Transformation of Women's Work in England, 1500-1660* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p.33.

within the household was far from providing the entire picture of women's work experiences.

Other areas of female work included occupations in textiles, mining and metalwork; in brickyards and paper mills; as nurses and midwives (unprofessionalized). Urban employment included work as seamstresses; in millinery and laundering; in food and drink production; and selling goods on the streets and in shops. Retail, as a whole, was important. Sanderson notes that 'In the eighteenth century the most common type of apprenticeship for girls was apprenticeship to shopkeeping'.³⁹ Some of these occupations were the same as those carried out by men; some were female specific or female only (wet-nursing for example); and some carried additional connotations, as was the case with prostitution.⁴⁰

Across the range of women's work in the eighteenth century, however, one factor remains prominent, and that is the role their work played in the household economy. Many historians see the family economy as the crucial concept for understanding women's work in pre-industrial England. R.E. Pahl defines the household as 'the essential unit for getting all forms of work done'. This required the contribution of *all* members, who co-operated on developing strategies, 'which made the best use of resources'. Women played a vital role in this and 'their labour was essential to the economic survival of the household unit'.⁴¹ Tilly and Scott describe the woman as 'the cornerstone of the family economy'⁴² towards which, as

³⁹ Elizabeth C. Sanderson, *Women and Work in Eighteenth-Century Edinburgh*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p.91.

⁴⁰ Comprehensive surveys of the occupations and trades in which women were involved include Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850*, (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1969); Deborah Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work, 1700 to the Present*; and Parts 10, 11 and 12 of Bridget Hill, *Eighteenth-Century Women: An Anthology*.

⁴¹ Pahl, *On Work*, Introduction, pp. 10-11.

⁴² Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work and Family*, p.60.

Hill shows, her contribution was varied in terms of labour and resources. Malcolmson's study of the labouring poor finds the variety of activities underpinning the household economy to be evidence that its viability was 'the crucial priority in life'.⁴³ Diversifying was an economic imperative, but it maximized the efficient use of resources and meant that the household economy was self-sufficient in nature. Hill makes this point too (if more cautiously), though Cahn, writing of an earlier period, emphasizes the decline of the self-sufficient household and housewife.⁴⁴

Also important is the effect the processes of industrialization and capitalism had on the family economy and women's position within it. Current historiography invariably begins by citing the work of Alice Clark and Ivy Pinchbeck as pioneering – and in some ways unsurpassed – in the field of women's work in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁴⁵ However, the limitations of their conclusions in the light of subsequent research – including Pinchbeck's assumption that agrarian and industrial revolution coincided and led to a separation in home and workplace – have been challenged and different models (themselves the subject of debate) proposed in their place.⁴⁶ The processes of economic change are, in any case, vigorously resistant to temporal and spatial specification: a demonstrable development in one place may not touch another for years, if ever. Furthermore, interpretive procedures are themselves liable to a scrutiny that exposes limitations in conceptualizing. Maxine Berg, for example, warns that 'The household economy as it has been understood is a myth'. It is only useful conceptually when 'dissected

⁴³ Malcolmson in Pahl, *On Work*, pp. 48-60. These references, p.49. See also his discussion of 'Self-sufficiency in Eighteenth-Century England' on pp. 58-60.

⁴⁴ Hill, *Women, Work and Sexual Politics*, p.24 and Cahn, p.32.

⁴⁵ Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (1919) and Ivy Pinchbeck *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850* (1930).

⁴⁶ Hill offers a thorough discussion of Clark and Pinchbeck's work. See *Women, Work and Sexual Politics*, pp.1-12.

as a changing part of a dynamic process of industrial and capitalist growth or decline' when 'it can help to reveal undiscovered directions and possibilities'.⁴⁷

Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, who cites Berg, discusses the intrusion of historians' own assumptions and values into the processes of evaluation, an effect she in part attributes to the problematic availability (and interpretation of) the historical evidence.⁴⁸

A brief survey of the debates concerning the effects of economic change on women's work and the household economy in the eighteenth century reveals a cluster of binary terminology: continuity and change; golden age and lost opportunity; optimism and pessimism.⁴⁹ Behind this lies the issue of whether women benefited under capitalism and industrialization in terms of increased employment opportunities and enhanced status, or whether they were disadvantaged, losing out both in jobs and wages, as well as in whatever employment value they possessed before. Accounts such as Clark's take the 'golden age' line, arguing that women enjoyed an influential and valued position in a household-based family economy, often working on an equal footing with men, and that this was eroded by industrial capitalism. This so-called 'pessimist' view saw women's position undermined by the separation of home and workplace, the segregation of capitalized work along gender lines, an attendant de-skilling of women's labour, with an increased dependence on the man's earned income. Others, such as Edward Shorter, have taken a more 'optimistic' line, arguing that 'it was under capitalism that working women advanced to within at least shouting

⁴⁷ Maxine Berg, 'Women's Work, Mechanization and the Early Phases of Industrialization in England' in Pahl, *On Work*, pp.61-94. This reference, p.85.

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping and Business in the Eighteenth Century*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp.115-17.

⁴⁹ This is aside from the question of the processes of agrarian and industrial revolution and whether these terms are meaningful as historical descriptors at all. Hill provides a useful summary of the question in *Women, Work and Sexual Politics*, pp.9-23.

distance of social equality with men'. Fundamental to this was the power of the wage – 'the money wages that these women earned had their names written on them' – as a source of new economic strength, which allowed women to be independent earners outside the home.⁵⁰ Tilly and Scott, however, contend that 'Wages themselves [...] did not constitute "liberation"'.⁵¹ They stress the importance of investigating change, as do Hudson and Lee who usefully tie together some of these debates, writing: 'Industrial capitalism did indeed bring some widening of the sphere of women's work outside the home, but it was accompanied by a significant redefinition and reworking of the sexual division of labour as well as by the emergence of new ideological and social constraints'.⁵²

As we have seen, Deborah Simonton has argued that, since work is mediated by ideology, any account of it along economic lines alone is incomplete. Concepts of gender, status and power must also be included. However, the economic and the ideological are persistent bedfellows and both are necessary for studying women's work from the perspective of gender. The focus here falls on the (changing) values, status and attitudes attached to women's work, some of which have already implicitly emerged from the sections above. There is, to begin with, the role of women in the family economy, which has been shown to have been essential to the viability of the household. This leads Hill to make the reasonable deduction that women must have had a conscious sense of their contribution and its value. Yet, if as Simonton puts it, ideas about work are 'dependent on the cultural

⁵⁰ Edward Shorter, 'Women's Work: What Difference Did Capitalism Make?', pp.513 and 520. Shorter argues 'it was in the traditional "moral" economy that women suffered the most serious loss of social status' (513). Hill points out that women had always made a money contribution to the family budget, p.45; as does Simonton, who offers it as a direct riposte to Shorter, p.9. Simonton further argues, 'More important than cash itself was who controlled it and how work was regarded'.

⁵¹ Tilly and Scott, p.2.

⁵² See Hudson and Lee's introduction to *Women's Work and the Family Economy in Historical Perspective*, pp.1-47 for a clear and thorough discussion of the debates and their historiography. This reference, p.6.

values associated with it',⁵³ there is also the question of how the sheer diversity of women's contribution to the household is to be construed in terms of value perceptions; some work was paid and some unpaid, and there was also the 'labour' of reproduction and childcare. This, in turn, inaugurates a consideration of how women's work, and working women, were positioned ideologically and the extent to which women found an agency in shaping their own sense of value and status.⁵⁴

Michael Roberts has written that 'we still lack an account of contemporary attitudes towards work' for the early modern period. The differentiation between what he calls 'plebeian' and 'elite' conceptions of work must also 'remain mysterious'.⁵⁵ Writing of the eighteenth century, Malcolmson suggests that so little primary evidence was produced by the labouring people themselves that perceptions of plebeian work are invariably mediated through the 'ideological dispositions' of the 'dominant class'.⁵⁶ Under a separate discipline, Donna Landry's study of the poetry of labouring-class women finds an 'identifiable discourse' between 1739 and 1796, in which there is evidence of 'ideological and subjective contestation'.⁵⁷ Writing on Mary Collier for example, Landry reads 'The Woman's Labour' as evidencing proto-feminism and labouring-class consciousness in its contesting of the historical silence about women's work: 'the triple burden of wage labor, housework, and childcare'.⁵⁸ There is a difficulty, then, in finding a consistent way of evaluating the cultural meanings of work when the evidence is

⁵³ Simonton, p.3.

⁵⁴ Simonton, p.9.

⁵⁵ Michael Roberts, "'Words They are Women, and Deeds They are Men': Images of Work and Gender in Early Modern England" in Charles and Duffin, editors, *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial England*, pp.120-80. This reference, p.129.

⁵⁶ Malcolmson, *Life and Labour in England 1700-1780*, p.18. The view of what Malcolmson calls the propertied classes was that manual labour was 'essential for the welfare of society as a whole'. There were also expectations of 'how labouring people *ought* to think and behave', p.17.

⁵⁷ Donna Landry, *The Muses of Resistance: Laboring Class Women's Poetry in Britain, 1739-1796* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 7-8.

⁵⁸ Landry, pp.56-7. See her discussion of Mary Collier, 'The resignation of Mary Collier: some problems in feminist literary history', pp.56-77.

uneven and the ideology hegemonized. A further complication lies in unravelling the impact of late-eighteenth-century, early- nineteenth-century domestic ideology on perceptions and experiences of women's work, for, typically seen as a bourgeois ideology, it nevertheless had 'complex implications for working-class women'.⁵⁹

One route through some of these difficulties is to look at the gendering of work and the historical arc of the sexual division of labour.

Examining how work is imaged in printed evidence from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Roberts suggests three ways in which it was structured intellectually, each having gender implications. First there is the sixteenth-century Protestant conception of work as a vocation or calling; secondly, the idea of work as interacting with nature by means of physical labour or mechanical art; and thirdly, the moral value of work as employment counteracting idleness and promoting industriousness and self-reliance.⁶⁰ In each case, Roberts argues, the linkage of these conceptions to the social order meant women were disadvantaged. These formulations continued into the eighteenth century, where vocation was re-described as subordination, art and labour were hierarchized in terms of skill on physical and intellectual grounds, and the image of the thrifty housewife prevailed. Tilly and Scott have argued that 'women's work has persistently been associated with low skill and low pay' and consistently 'ranked lower than men's'.⁶¹ From this, the economic and ideological conceptualizing of 'skill' requires consideration.

⁵⁹ Simonton, p.87.

⁶⁰ Roberts additionally points out that women often engaged in strenuous work despite the prevailing notion of their incapacity. One contemporary way of resolving this dilemma was to construe their reproductive role as 'labour' rather than 'art'. See pp. 130-34.

⁶¹ Tilly and Scott, pp.2-3. Pamela Sharpe points out in *Adapting to Capitalism: Working Women in the English Economy, 1700-1850* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1996) that in the late-eighteenth century and first part of the nineteenth century 'Women's wages average out at a third of a comparable male wage, p146.

The term 'skill' is imprecise. As Simonton puts it, 'Skill has been perceived in terms of strength, training, intelligence, custom and control', but as a notion it lacks a clear definition.⁶² Berg argues that 'the very definitions of skilled and unskilled labour have at their root social and gender distinctions of far greater significance than any technical attribute'.⁶³ As we have seen, an important area for women's work lay in domestic industry, with its emphasis on handicrafts. The skills women brought to this work included deftness, manual dexterity, persistence and quickness. However, these were perceived less as work skills than as natural female characteristics, which in effect deskilled their labour contribution. Moreover, both the ways in which this work was seen to overlap with housework and the diversity of women's work as a whole ensured skill remained ill-defined in relation to women. The association with the domestic and the fact that, under industrialization and mechanization, women lost out to men in the control of new technologies further hierarchizes issues of skill, status and value; for women's skills could be placed in a moral and affective register too, and measured in terms of the efficient management of the household. These skills, and the place of housework as part of women's work patterns, also have a significant economic and ideological history.

If, as historians now agree, waged labour was gendered long before the impact of industrialization, then the sexual division of labour at home was also in place prior to the economic and ideological changes of the eighteenth century which served to consolidate constructions of domesticity.⁶⁴ Although there is evidence that men participated in some domestic work, this gradually declined over the period and it was women who bore the brunt of cooking, cleaning, mending and childcare:

⁶² Simonton, p.3.

⁶³ Maxine Berg, *The Age of Manufactures: Industry, Innovation and Work in Britain, 1700-1820* (London: Fontana Press, 1985) p.151. There is a useful section on 'Skill definitions', pp.151-53.

⁶⁴ See Shoemaker, p.122.

‘unpaid domestic work’ as Charles and Duffin put it.⁶⁵ The status and value of such work are automatically implicated when work is defined as being waged labour. Shoemaker has noted the growing ideological distinction between ‘housework’ (unwaged) as ‘female’ and ‘(real) work’ (waged) as ‘male’.⁶⁶ That all work is hierarchized in one way or another, men’s as well as women’s, is not an original perception, but the tripartite nature of women’s work (waged labour, unpaid housework and reproduction/childcare) posits it as having its own unique internal hierarchy. As far as housework is concerned, Simonton argues that it was important to women themselves in terms of defining ‘their scope and space’.⁶⁷ The woman’s management of her responsibilities, the decision-making it entailed – in short, the ways in which she structured the organization of her hierarchy – represents one way in which women could actively shape their work patterns.

This may seem to suggest the influence of a bourgeois ideology of domesticity before the fact; that women were to be valued as they conducted themselves within the home, removed from the sphere of waged labour. For poorer women, this was scarcely a viable option, but for those of the middling sorts, the idea that the home was their ‘proper’ sphere was shaping itself earlier than has sometimes been represented. This must in part be due to the maturation processes of ideology, but Shoemaker also questions the economic assumptions that ascribe the ‘phenomenon of the “idle” middle class wife’ to the rise of capitalism. In fact, she existed throughout the period.⁶⁸ This is not to say that women of the middling sorts

⁶⁵ Charles and Duffin, p. 15.

⁶⁶ Shoemaker, p. 118.

⁶⁷ Simonton, p. 18.

⁶⁸ Shoemaker, pp. 113-114. This has been linked to the increase in leisure time and meant that women were engaged in different kinds of activities. Far from being ‘idle’, women were expected to put their time to proper use, within the household and in culturally approved roles such as philanthropy. Charity, indeed, was an important area of work for women of the middling and upper ranks and is discussed more fully later in the chapter.

did not engage in waged work in addition to their housewifely responsibilities. In some cases, this work could share territory with that of labouring-class women, in needlework, retail and food and drink production for example, though physical labour as such was eschewed. More typically, middle-class women helped husbands in *their* work, assisting in family businesses, ‘minding the shop’, contributing to the running of schools, aiding the conduct of trade. Although these last examples were not directly waged, they were income-related and construed as distinct from managing the household. It was the last, however, that was increasingly regarded as the only proper work for women if they were to be considered genteel.

The particular way in which work as it relates to the management of the household is conceptualized is usefully mediated by the question of domestic service. We saw earlier that this was an important area of women’s work, providing a wide range of employment opportunities. Yet if the women employed as servants were involved in one kind of work, the women who employed them were involved in another. The engaging, controlling, managing and surveillance of servants was all part of the education of women of the middling and upper sorts. In effect, her work was to regulate the domestic workplace and her labour was, thus, of a distinctive nature.⁶⁹ This has interesting implications for those genteel women who were compelled to work through economic necessity. Educated and culturally inaugurated into the mistress’s conception of work, they in fact found themselves experiencing work as the servant. Any claim to economic agency is thus made to sit precariously with issues of value and status.

It was typically widows or single women who sought work to offset economic hardship. As was noted earlier, the types of employment undertaken were

⁶⁹ Seleski posits the domestic economy in this sense as a version of the political economy. See her chapter in *Popular Culture in England c. 1500-1850*, p.147. For a full discussion of the woman’s role in regulating the household, see the previous chapter on Frances Sheridan.

often situated within the private sphere and included needlework, or working as a governess or paid companion. This meant the work could remain domestic and, in the case of education, maternal in nature. Jane Spencer has also made an interesting link between the ‘permitted’ if problematized option for genteel women of earning by means of the pen. She suggests ‘writing novels might be seen as the literate middle-class household’s substitute for the declining home industries which had once enabled the housewife to contribute to the support of her family’.⁷⁰ Above all, married or unmarried, the difficulty of paid work for women of the middling and upper sorts lay in the ideological construction of gentility as ‘a special form of femininity which ran directly counter to acting as a visibly independent economic agent’.⁷¹

The visibility or invisibility of women’s work; the extent to which it encompassed or excluded independence, self-dependence or economic agency; and the ideological and economic meanings it bore across forms, periods and ranks, press home – in fact extend – Sharpe’s observation that ‘we need a much broader definition of “employment” for women than for men.’ The industrious poor woman and the ideal domestic woman could be simultaneously an economic reality and an ideological construct; both working, both earning, both regulating their households, but with very different connotations as to what working, earning and regulating could mean. Returning to the novel as a potential site for the discursive representation of these flexible meanings, and to Burney’s work in particular, we can expect to find an emphasis on the genteel woman’s experience since this is the perspective from which the novels were written. Nevertheless, in the works following *Evelina* and *The Witlings*, it is evident that Burney developed an

⁷⁰ Jane Spencer, *The Rise of The Woman Novelist*, p.20.

⁷¹ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, ‘“The hidden investment”: women and the enterprise’ in Pamela Sharpe, *Women’s Work*, pp.239-293. This reference, p.286.

increasing awareness that different kinds (and constructions) of work produced different kinds (and constructions) of experience. Her next published work, the novel *Cecilia* (1782), can be read in part as Burney's take on the sexual division of labour question. Whilst there is no doubt that her thematic treatment of this issue – and her pursuance of the self-dependence theme – are deliberately problematized to make fictive capital, in the context of her work as a whole it can be seen that Burney's strategies had clear ideological purposes.

***Cecilia* : 'A scheme of happiness at once rational and refined'**

The question of labour would appear to be the last thing on the mind of Cecilia Beverley, the heroine of Burney's second novel. Beautiful, intelligent, a wealthy heiress, Cecilia's only sorrow is the recent death of her uncle, her last living relation. Like Austen's later heroine Emma Woodhouse, it would seem Cecilia has reached her one-and-twentieth year with very little to trouble her. Yet Burney wastes little time in complicating this seemingly benign situation. The opening paragraphs set out the details of Cecilia's fortune: ten thousand pounds from her parents and three thousand per annum from her uncle, the latter, the narrator disingenuously announces, 'with no other restriction than that of annexing her name, if she married, to the disposal of her hand and her riches'.⁷² That 'no other' and 'if' bear a heavy and premeditated irony, for the restriction and its power over name are to provide one of the major plot thrusts of the novel, where they clash relentlessly with the pride and ancestral pedigree of the Delvile family whose last heir Cecilia later wishes to marry. Furthermore, Cecilia's minority and sex

⁷² All references are to *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress*, edited by Peter Sabor and Margaret Anne Doody (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press (World's Classics), 1988). This reference pp.5-6. Further references are cited in the text.

mean that any nominal independence her wealth gives her is prescribed by her three male guardians and, later, a society that refuses to countenance the idea of wealth outside of masculine control. The question Cecilia poses herself of how to manage her wealth meaningfully is thus placed in conflict with proving she has a right to manage it at all. Linked to this is another question: what constitutes a purposeful and productive scheme of life when you are a self-dependent young lady of means and moral responsibility? As Kristina Straub puts it, what are ‘the occupations and employments best suited to genteel female happiness’?⁷³

The first portions of the novel are concerned with Cecilia’s involvement with Mr Harrel, one of her three guardians, in whose home she takes up residence. The initial appeal of being introduced to a round of social pleasures and of reunion with a former schoolfriend, now Mrs Harrel, proves short lived however. Harrel’s hedonistic and self-destructive pursuit of high living increasingly compromises Cecilia’s sexual and financial autonomy. He commits himself (unasked) to arranging her marriage to Sir Robert Floyer to whom he is in debt and later turns to more direct forms of asset-stripping, using blackmail and suicide threats to extort money from her. Under his ‘care’, Cecilia’s parental fortune is eventually dissipated.

Long before these consequences are accomplished, Cecilia has recognized a significant personal need to distance herself from the Harrels’ way of life and find ‘some plan of conduct, better suited to her taste and feelings’ (54). Her wish is for ‘A scheme of happiness at once rational and refined’ (55). Choosing her own friends, directing her own time and self-authorizing her sense of ‘what was due from her to the world’ are what constitute Cecilia’s work, the independent woman

⁷³ Straub, *Divided Fictions*, p.110. Straub’s chapter, ‘Cecilia: Love and Work’ pp.109-51, has been a valuable resource for my discussion.

of fortune's equivalent of a diverse and flexible pattern of employment. By deploying the practical difficulties of implementing such a scheme Burney scrutinizes the conditions in which Cecilia's impetus to moral and economic self-sufficiency is consistently checked.

Cecilia's predicament is further complicated by the personal and social agendas of the people around her. Not only Harrel, but her other guardians too – the parsimonious Mr Briggs and the haughty Mr Delvile⁷⁴ – offer no support, instead expecting Cecilia's concordance with their views of her unfitness to manage for herself. Their mutual antagonism is just another of the conflictual situations besetting Cecilia.⁷⁵ This conflict is literalized in a duel between Sir Robert Floyer and Belfield, one of whom it is (wrongly) assumed Cecilia will marry. It is also literalized in the masquerade scene, where a cluster of men, appositely disguised, compete with each other for her attention.⁷⁶ A 'white domino' and a 'black devil' in particular lock horns, the former turning out to be Young Delvile whose later veerings between ardour and mis-construction cause Cecilia intense private conflict. The latter is Mr Monckton, ostensibly Cecilia's most loyal friend, but in fact an unscrupulous schemer after her body and fortune. In this way, Burney converts the prevalent view of women's social and economic subordination to men into fictional strategies of plot and character. The cost of all this, Burney argues, is high. Cecilia's later declaration to Mrs Delvile – 'As my own Agent I regard myself no longer' (646-647) – presages the psychological dismantling of her personal economy and an eventual slippage into madness.

⁷⁴ The depiction of Mr Delvile as unyielding, ostentatiously self-assured and embodying ancestral pride reminds one of Lady Grimston in Sheridan's *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*.

⁷⁵ Zonitch reads their antagonism in terms of the aristocratic order's attempt to maintain economic and cultural authority in face of the threat from a proto-bourgeoisie.

⁷⁶ One of the best accounts of the masquerade scene is Terry Castle's: 'Masquerade and Utopia I: Burney's *Cecilia*' in *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp.253-89.

However, Cecilia refuses to give up her agency in determining what work it is appropriate for her to do. To the backdrop of these conflicts and Harrel's moral capitulations in the face of mounting debts, Cecilia continues to consider how she might fashion a role for herself. In introducing her to the labouring Hill family and to the work-challenged Belfield, Burney presents Cecilia with the opportunities to refine her views as to what that role should be and to the meanings of work more generally. Burney's handling of the thematic parallels and juxtapositions allowed by the Hill and Belfield strands marks out her commitment to an ideological treatment of work, and women's work in particular, in this novel.⁷⁷

In the case of the Hill family, Cecilia's first encounter with their predicament occurs within the context of her own 'internal eagerness' (70) to find a morally satisfying arrangement for 'the disposition of her time, and the distribution of her wealth' (71). In a curious way, then, the Hills become a resource to Cecilia in her quest for meaningful employment. This converts to her commitment to find meaningful employment for *them*. This is morally structured since it is Harrel's non-payment for work carried out by Mr Hill, a carpenter, that lends authority to Cecilia's active involvement with them, marking her disapprobation of Harrel's way of life and corresponding approval of the family's virtuous industry.

Mrs Hill is presented as weak and sickly from want. Her husband is laid up, her children, one of whom has died, are starving; yet her appearance is 'neat' (71), her family hard working and her claims are only for what her husband has justly earned by his labour. Cecilia's sensibility and her sense of social and moral justice are elicited by this encounter. The more Harrel evades his responsibilities, the more Cecilia's are activated towards charity and benevolence. Following the carpenter's

⁷⁷ Doody, Gallagher, Straub and Epstein consider *Cecilia* in the context of Burney's own life at the time of composition. Thus, Straub finds it to be informed by Burney's own conflicts concerning love and work, p.109.

death, Cecilia helps set Mrs Hill up in a haberdasher's shop 'by way of putting them all into a decent way of living' (201). Two of her children are placed in a school 'where they might be taught plain work, which could not but prove a useful qualification for whatever sort of business they might hereafter attempt' (201). The sight of 'laborious indigence' (201) and 'honest industry' (203) encourages Cecilia to moralize on the culpability of dissipation in comparison. She finds 'her life had never appeared to her so important, nor her wealth so valuable' than as a result of 'the transaction of this affair' (203). The Hills thrive and would appear to represent the ideal success story of honest, self-sufficient endeavour, at least as mediated through a middle-class ideology. Yet it is precisely this ideology that Burney is at pains to dissect. The strict focus Burney maintains on her heroine's point of view and the relegation of the Hills to functional stock accentuates a construction of work that Burney shows to be incomplete in its neglect of realistic economic imperatives. As will be seen, Belfield's search for self-dependence through work is also part of this. More immediately, Burney's strategies are directed to the depiction of Cecilia's charitable work, which acquires a crucial status within the novel as a consequence.

In showing her heroine as actively benevolent, Burney places her novels conventionally enough in an arc of eighteenth-century literature, ranging from Richardson, Sarah Scott, Hannah More and on towards the Victorian novel.⁷⁸ Burney extends this, however, by emphasizing the degree to which Cecilia seeks to define the meaningfulness of her work role in terms of her charitable actions. Indeed, Barbara Zonitch has argued that 'practicing [*sic*] charity is the key to

⁷⁸ Sidney Bidulph's charitable use of Warner's fortune also comes to mind here.

female self-empowerment in *Cecilia*'.⁷⁹ It is necessary, then, to consider the importance of female philanthropy in the eighteenth century, not only as it interacted with the lives of working women and/or was regarded as work in its own right; but also as it offered Burney ways of using contemporary constructions in order to situate her own fictive representations.

Conduct literature indicates charity to be an essential part of a woman's Christian duties and ties it to the proper economic management of the well-regulated household.⁸⁰ Small-scale in nature, private and personal, such charity marked a traditional element in the relations between rich and poor, as did more complexly integrated schemes like those of the fictional Millenium Hall and Hannah More's Mendip schools.⁸¹ If women have been typically seen as 'charitable in their habits'⁸² and the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility valorized a feminine capacity for sympathetic, heartfelt responsiveness to objects of pity, the practicalities of women's philanthropic activity and relationship to the structures and technologies of organized charity have been less well attended to. This may simply be because women did not have a role in strategic organization. However, the evidence shows that this changed over the course of the eighteenth century and that women developed an increasingly prominent philanthropic role, which itself served to reformulate conceptions of female work.

⁷⁹ Zonitch, p.78.

⁸⁰ See Joanna Innes, 'The "mixed economy of welfare" in early modern England' in *Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past*, Martin Daunt, editor, (London: UCL Press, 1996), pp.139-80. This reference, p.164.

⁸¹ Patricia Demers, *The World of Hannah More* (The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), Chapter 5, 'Schools and Tracts: Consuming Zeal', pp.99-118.

⁸² The observation is made by F.K. Prochaska in 'Women in English Philanthropy, 1790-1830', *International Review of Social History*, 19, 1974, pp.426-45. This reference, p.426.

Betsy Rodgers in her 1949 study of eighteenth-century philanthropy wrote 'The history of charity is the history of the changes which have occurred in the attitude of the rich towards the poor'.⁸³ More recently, Donna T. Andrew has examined the attitudes and purposes informing the changing practices of charitable activity in eighteenth-century London in her 1989 book *Philanthropy and Police*, while her 1992 article on charity sermons looks at continuities and changes in Anglican modes of persuasion and argument to reach similar conclusions concerning charitable ends and means.⁸⁴ Andrew shows how the view of poverty as part of divine providence was affected by considerations on the nature of property to produce new theories of how the poor were to be relieved by the rich. A range of groups, religious and secular, emphasized different aspects of how aid should be directed and delivered to be of most benefit to the recipient, to the donor, and to the nation at large.⁸⁵ Such considerations, often paternalistic in tone, mediated both public and private forms of charity from the Poor Laws to the establishment and organization of charitable foundations (such as hospitals, asylums and workhouses). A recurring theme was what rights the needy had to sue for charity and what was to be expected from them in terms of reciprocal labour and productivity.

⁸³ Betsy Rodgers, *Cloak of Charity: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Philanthropy* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1949), p.1.

⁸⁴ Donna T. Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989); and 'On Reading Charity Sermons: Eighteenth-Century Anglican Solicitation and Exhortation' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 43, 1992, pp.581-91. One of the article's themes is the changes in the ~~exhortatory~~ aspects of sermons and it is interesting to read this alongside Burney's own charity tract, *Brief Reflections Relative to the Emigrant French Clergy*, published in 1793, which, in ~~both~~ subject matter and strategy, uses the techniques of the sermon to exhort its audience to Christian charity.

⁸⁵ See *Philanthropy and Police*, Chapter 1. For ideas on subjective and group impulses motivating concerns for the poor see Sandra Cavallo, 'The Motivations of Benefactors' in Jonathan Berry and Colin Jones, editors, *Medicine and Charity Before the Welfare State* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), pp.46-62, particularly pp.50-4. David Owen surveys religious and humanitarian aspects of eighteenth-century benevolence in the first part of *English Philanthropy, 1660-1960* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp.9-88. On donor motives, he notes 'the impulses of religion, humanitarianism, vanity, social responsibility, malice, determined (and often bigoted) convictions on some special question, or the simple puzzlement of testators who lacked close relatives.' Page 77.

The historiography of charity in this period indicates an emergent emphasis on the promotion of self-reliance as a prime object of charitable action. Andrew locates this to the period 1770-1790, ascribing its impetus to theories concerning the moral iniquities of dependency, which infantilized the poor rather than encouraging a 'self-sufficient adulthood'.⁸⁶ Beneficiaries were thus to be inducted into an increased sense of personal responsibility, which rewarded 'correct' behaviour and promoted a more providential attitude to their own welfare needs.⁸⁷ Although this could be directed to individuals, it was significantly an encouragement to family sufficiency and, hence, to a self-sufficient construction of the role of work as the chief means of meeting the family's survival requirements.

Charity, then, in both its public and private technologies, was a changing and contested field in the eighteenth century. Women had little part to play as makers of policy, though of course they featured – often prominently – as recipients of charitable projects; prostitutes being a case in point.⁸⁸ Charitable foundations such as the Magdalen House and maternity hospitals are further examples of female-specific charities. Nevertheless, women did have a role to play as dispensers of charity. Donna T. Andrew examines the charity letters of Lady Spencer to explore the obligations and responsibilities of the wealthy and the nature of the relations between donor and recipient.⁸⁹ What emerges, alongside the fact of the 'vast number of women'⁹⁰ who wrote to Lady Spencer, is the sheer scale of the charitable enterprise this entailed, requiring astute management, monitoring and

⁸⁶ See *Philanthropy and Police*, Chapter 5, 'The Attack on Dependency'. This reference p.156.

⁸⁷ See 'Poor Relief and Charity' in M. J. Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, pp.447-74, which offers a clear reading of how poor relief laws and the conduct of charity addressed themselves to encouraging self-sufficiency.

⁸⁸ See *Philanthropy and Police*, pp.121-23.

⁸⁹ Donna T. Andrew, 'Noblesse Oblige: Female charity in an age of sentiment' in John Brewer and Susan Staves, editors, *Early Modern Conceptions of Property* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp.275-300. This reference, p.293.

⁹⁰ As Andrew points out, these were 'of all ranks and conditions', often women on their own who had suffered as a result of their dependency on men, *ibid*, p.288.

discrimination. Andrew positions this by references to the Ladies' Charitable Society (founded in the early 1770s) which had among its aims the provision of work appropriate for women both of the lower classes and of genteel birth, and which involved its female organizers in the practicalities of managing this provision.⁹¹

Another example of an individual engaged in personal charity is Elizabeth Montagu (1720-1800), who inaugurated and supervised a range of charitable projects, from supporting needy relatives (including her sister, Sarah Scott) to assisting the workers in her husband's coal mines.⁹² The money she dispensed may not have been entirely at her own disposal (until she was widowed in 1775), but she was able to persuade the male members of her family to support the endeavours she herself approved. Furthermore, her interest in helping other women, her organizational skills and her determination to sustain an active involvement in her various projects suggest the scope for experiencing a sense of moral and economic independence through these means. This could also imply that the emphasis on encouraging self-sufficiency in the recipients of charity could also accrue to women who practised charitable activity as a form of work.

In his article on women's philanthropic roles in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, F.K. Prochaska produces statistical evidence to suggest a significant rise in the number of women actively participating in organized charity at this time.⁹³ Such activity could be construed as ideologically sound since it was predicated on a construction of feminine duties and virtues shared with domesticity. Furthermore, female time, money and effort were often simply a contribution to

⁹¹ Ibid, pp.292-93.

⁹² Edith Sedgwick Larson, 'A Measure of Power: The Personal Charity of Elizabeth Montagu', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 16, 1986, pp.197-210.

⁹³ See note 82 above.

male-organized charities. Yet, as Prochaska has shown, there was a proliferation of female-only charities in this period, and this produced increasing opportunities for more directive participation for women, who could also acquire and use administrative skills in the process.⁹⁴ In one sense, this can be seen as an extension of women's customary work in the moral and economic regulation of the household, but it also goes beyond this by establishing a distinct space for autonomous and self-directed activity. Prochaska may refer to it as 'outdoor relief for leisured women',⁹⁵ but this should not diminish the practical and subjective scope it produced for women to find meaningful work roles for themselves.

Nevertheless, as a number of historians have pointed out, middle-class women's increased participation in charity also needs to be placed in the context of a decline in other opportunities available to them. Prochaska makes a direct link here to the impact of industrialization, the disruptions of which not only produced more call for charitable relief from the labouring poor, but also led to fewer occupations for women of the middling ranks.⁹⁶ Simonton similarly finds that the 'growth in women's charitable activity occurred parallel to middle-class women leaving the workplace'.⁹⁷ The growing ideological emphasis on the desirability and respectability of non-waged work roles for genteel women played its part too. Simonton concludes that the philanthropic role was one women fought hard for since it preserved, or replaced, for them the meanings that derive from waged work.⁹⁸ In this sense, female philanthropic work could become a contested area,

⁹⁴ Prochaska, p.432.

⁹⁵ Prochaska, p.441.

⁹⁶ Prochaska, p.435. Other reasons included the rise of the Evangelical movement and the fear of social unrest associated with republican ideals. (See Prochaska, pp.437-40.) An intriguing example is the increase in charities directed to preparing the poor for domestic work, since it was reliance on domestic servants that produced the very leisure time that made charitable activity possible.

⁹⁷ Simonton, p.159.

⁹⁸ Simonton, p.160.

where participation in organized charity was placed in conflict with domestic responsibilities and where, even if their labour was unwaged, women were sustaining an economic role for themselves.⁹⁹ In Simonton's words, many women were thus able to 'create their own meaning out of work, and a sense of identity'.¹⁰⁰

Of significance here is what Cavallo has referred to as the 'symbolic and metaphorical meanings' of charitable behaviour.¹⁰¹ This touches on the – always elusive – subjective motives and experiences of individuals, which might include habituated duty, genuine altruism, moral self-idealization or concern for status and power. The connections between these and the relationship between subjectivity and ideology are also difficult to discern. However, in the dimension of symbolic and metaphorical meanings, both of charitable behaviour and forms of work behaviour as a whole, women's roles are situated precisely within this relationship and these connections. This can be seen in the way charitable activity itself becomes a symbolic alternative to a participation in waged work. Thus, it is women's psychological role, the capacity they command to engage with the metaphorical meanings of work in both the subjective and ideological realms that is crucial to the determining of their employment roles, charitable or otherwise.

Frances Burney's Cecilia makes a conscious effort to link the subjective and the ideological, the symbolic and the real in her schemes of benevolence. However, Burney makes an important distinction between Cecilia's imaginative structuring of

⁹⁹ Simonton argues this also led to a more politicized role for women. Beth Fowkes Tobin in *Superintending the Poor: Charitable Ladies and Paternal Landlords in British Fiction, 1770-1860* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993) is more emphatic about the political role, arguing that middle-class men and women used discursive strategies surrounding labour, poverty and charity to 'undermine the landed upper classes' control over the rural economy of early industrial Britain', p.1.

¹⁰⁰ Simonton, p.161.

¹⁰¹ Cavallo, *Medicine and Charity Before the Welfare State*, p.51.

this effort in the wake of experience compared to her initial expectation. At first, Cecilia's benevolence is energetic and wide-ranging, marked by 'liberality', 'generosity' and 'munificence' (130); but the initial surge of pleasure palls and Cecilia measures her very subjectivity in terms of gains and losses, the 'fervour of self-approbation' (130) offset by social isolation. Nevertheless, the impulse to use her wealth independently and responsibly remains firm at this stage, and her willingness to learn by experience and modify her schemes accordingly reflects this desire for autonomous choice.

The schemes continue under the guidance of Albany, who introduces Cecilia to objects deserving of her charity. Awed by Albany's attacks on luxury and pleasure and anxious to vindicate her own integrity, Cecilia places herself at his disposal, preoccupied still with carrying out her fit work and "glad to be instructed how my existence may be useful" (709). In return Albany requires her purse, her deeds and, he tells Cecilia, "you must give to me also your time and your thoughts" (709). In effect, Cecilia becomes Albany's employee with her benevolence being her labour, in its symbolic and psychological, as well as practical, registers of meaning. However, Burney is steadily confusing these registers. Cecilia's determination 'to think and to live for herself' (792) when she comes of age and takes control of her own fortune sits uneasily with Albany's demands for the full possession of her thoughts and deeds. Furthermore, the description of the 'system of her oeconomy', which, 'like that of her liberality, was formed by rules of reason, and her own ideas of right, and not by compliance with example, nor by emulation with the gentry in her neighbourhood' (792) is marked out as the product of independent psychological work, carried out at an autonomously subjective rather than a collectively ideological level. Yet, following

her marriage to Delvile and the loss of her fortune, Cecilia is left to lament ‘the capital error she had committed, in living constantly to the utmost extent of her income, without ever preparing, though so able to have done it, against any unfortunate contingency’ (873). Like Juliet in *The Wanderer*, Cecilia finds herself without fortune and ‘an outcast’ (868). The self-dependent endeavour to find a meaningful role through charitable work appears to have been irrevocably compromised.

D. Grant Campbell has argued that Cecilia’s charitable actions become ‘self-deluding dreams of power’, confused with ‘frustrated emotional needs’.¹⁰² While her charity is rational and responsible in itself, Campbell sees it implicated in the economic climate’s emphasis on capitalist consumerism and unstable credit transactions. It is economically and ideologically necessary that Cecilia get drawn into the climate of volatility, which will ultimately check her autonomy. As Campbell rightly argues, it is Cecilia’s charitable *impulses* – not only her works – that compromise her here.¹⁰³ They persuade her to give Harrel large sums of money against her better judgement and at the ultimate cost of her paternal fortune. They also induce her to place Delvile’s desires above her own when he pleads for a secret marriage. Significantly, it is at this point that Cecilia concludes ‘liberty of choice’ to be ‘the most heavy of calamities’ (621), ‘independence burthensome, and unlimited power a grievance’ (622). Just as she later gratefully accepts Albany as her ‘Almoner and her Monitor’ (709) in her charity work, Cecilia at this moment of moral and emotional crisis, also wishes rather ‘to be guided than to guide’ (621), thus, it would seem, making herself complicit in her own disempowerment.

¹⁰² D. Grant Campbell, ‘Fashionable Suicide: Conspicuous Consumption and the Collapse of Credit in Frances Burney’s *Cecilia*’, *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 20, 1990, pp.131-45. These references, p.141. In *Familiar Violence* Zonitch describes Cecilia’s schemes as philanthropic fantasies, because they cannot thrive in a world where women lack political agency, p. 73

¹⁰³ Ibid, pp.141-42.

But Burney does not link these fictive strategies to received ideological solutions. Rather, the internal dilemmas of character and external workings of plot are deployed within a field of purposefully problematized ideological questions. In this way *Cecilia* can be regarded as a protoversion of *The Wanderer*, whose explicit focus on ‘Female Difficulties’ extends the struggle for self-dependence into the more terrifying problem of daily subsistence. In *Cecilia*, the difficulties operate – though not without their own terrors – in the dimension of meanings mediated by the symbolic constructions of work. While Cecilia’s charity work represents her desire for responsible employment and an imperative to experience economic and moral independence, it is also Burney’s means to emblemize the decreasing work opportunities for women in a changing economic and ideological climate. On the one hand, the agency Cecilia claims (and it is significant that she refuses ‘emulation with the gentry in her neighbourhood’ (792), implying a self-sufficient resistance to collective ideology) denotes the value of charitable activity for genteel women seeking meaningful work experiences; while, on the other, the curtailment of what Cecilia’s social responsibility can achieve symbolizes the ideological and economic erosion of what work was allowed to mean for such women. The setbacks Cecilia experiences are thus part of the representation of a wider threat to female occupations.

Burney further addresses the vulnerability of *all* women in the dimension of work in the story of Belfield. The intriguing decision to embed female experiences in a masculine narrative is described by Straub as a way of displacing Cecilia’s search for meaningful employment by making Belfield ‘a sort of mirror for the ideological position specific to femininity in eighteenth-century culture’.¹⁰⁴ Yet

¹⁰⁴ Straub, p.147.

Burney is doing more than transposing the 'Labour with Independence' (659) theme across genders; her interests are not confined to the fictive strategies of doubling, but expand to promote the heroine's active engagement with Belfield's own experiences as a set of symbols she can use to refine her own understanding of what work can mean. The encounters between Cecilia and Belfield are thus not merely the accidents inherent in the workings of a parallel plot, but part of Burney's strategic project to address the ideological issues of employment.

Cecilia's first encounter with Belfield occurs very early in the novel at the house of Mr Monckton. A brief narrative exposition informs us that he was brought up for trade, but rejected this by entering first the army, then the law, without making a success of either. Burney sets up a dynamic in which Belfield's economic dependency (through lack of fortune) and his claims to ideological independence (as a male) meet Cecilia's economic independence (as an heiress) and ideological dependency (as a woman). Cecilia's silence as Belfield and Monckton debate the nature of independence reinforces the potential ramifications of this dynamic as Monckton quietly, if authoritatively, scorns Belfield's admiration for Cecilia's intention "to be guided by the light of your own understanding" (14). More particularly, her silence conveys that she has as yet no reason to seek in Belfield's experiences a way of understanding her own. Nevertheless, Burney early establishes a tonal sympathy between these two characters.

Although their paths continue to cross, it is not until Albany introduces her to Mrs and Miss Belfield that Cecilia first begins to pay close attention to Belfield's history. Significantly, this introduction occurs as she returns home from the successful conclusion of her scheme to establish the Hill family in 'a way to become useful to society, and comfortable to themselves' (204). Still affected by

the positive benefits and self-approbation of her philanthropic work, Cecilia makes the mistake of offering Miss Belfield charity and has to be corrected: “‘No, madam! [...] I am no beggar!’” (208). Her sense of responsibility remains engaged, however, compounded by the discovery that Belfield is incapacitated as a result of injuries sustained in the duel with Sir Robert. Just as the Hill family suffered economically as a result of Mr Hill’s inability to work through illness, the female Belfields also suffer economic deprivation with Belfield confined to bed.

Yet Belfield’s role as provider is questioned in Miss Belfield’s account of how her brother, educated beyond his family’s station to prefer a life of pleasure to that of trade, has proved unreliable, destroying the family business through ignorance and finding no steady means of support. Burney shows the effect of this on his mother and sister, who live in meagre lodgings and perform all the household work themselves.¹⁰⁵ In showing how these problems originated in the mishandling of Belfield’s education, Burney complicates issues of work and responsibility, for that education stands as a motif for how women are culturally inducted into patterns of thought and behaviour which exclude economic potential, while the female Belfields show the resultant victimization inherent in economic dependency. Cecilia’s work enterprise mobilizes to address the situation she encounters by devising ‘a private scheme’ (225) to procure Belfield medical assistance and ‘meditating [...] upon some plan of employment’ (248) for him. But, with only the register of charitable work to draw on, she is defeated by her ignorance of the ‘stations and employments of men’ (248). As well as her dawning realisation that even ‘the most active benevolence’ (252) is not enough to satisfy her own need for a sense of purpose in life, Cecilia is also beginning to understand the implications of

¹⁰⁵ Cecilia embarrasses Miss Belfield on her first visit by catching her doing the washing-up. Doody notes this as ‘a lowly task rarely recorded in fiction of the time’, *The Life in the Works*, p. 130

work in a wider context and that it is bound up with complex social and economic issues.

Cecilia's focus turns to her romantic involvement with Delvile: the misunderstandings that precede their mutual declaration of love and the conflicts surrounding the build-up to and thwarting of their secret marriage. It is some time before Cecilia encounters Belfield again. He comes to her aid when her carriage is overturned and proves to be working as a day-labourer. Her response is characteristic: to find some means of assisting him to relieve him from 'so melancholy an occupation' (658). (She finds him weeding.) Their differing constructions of work – hers in terms of charity, his as labour – resonate throughout this meeting. Belfield describes how, although a "poor miserable day-labourer", he has found the "true secret of happiness" in secluding himself from the world and pursuing "Labour with Independence" (659). Although he does not consider labour as sweet in itself, he argues it to be "sweet and salutary in its effects" (665).

Several things impress in this encounter. Firstly, its terms of engagement are active and direct: Cecilia is not silent or in the background here, nor are Belfield's experiences presented, as earlier, as narrative exposition. Rather, both participants engage in active dialogue, interrogating Belfield's circumstances. Secondly, Burney uses it to structure a wide-ranging debate about the nature of employment, its meanings for the poor, and how and what it should mean for Belfield. Finally, Burney shows Cecilia's shifting engagement with Belfield's career, here depicting her as 'more and more interested to hear him' (660) and more precisely questioning. Although she listens with 'a mixture of compassion, admiration and censure' and with a 'desire to assist him' (664), there is an emergent understanding

that she is encountering a set of metaphors relevant to her own case, not least in her concern with Belfield's choice of a particular mode of life and his construction of the relationship between work and happiness.¹⁰⁶

This idea develops when Cecilia extends her commitment to charity work as a counter to her failed romance with Delvile. Albany's involvement and his insistence on possessing her purse, her time and her thoughts ~~are~~ textually linked – to within three sentences – with Belfield's labouring “‘wilfully’” rather than “‘compulsatorily’” (709) as compared with their “‘work’” (710) which seeks to relieve the poor. Belfield, thus, continues to resonate in her mind, although the nature of independence through work is problematized in Albany's authoritative exactions and judgements. It is Monckton, however, who most fully questions Belfield's notions of independence on discovering that he has abandoned his labouring work to become a writer. He upbraids Belfield for his “‘Knight-errantry’” (736), describing his independence as “‘a mere idle dream of romance and enthusiasm; without existence in nature, without possibility in life’” (734).¹⁰⁷ In other words, it is a contrivance of Belfield's own making and, as Monckton tells him, politically and socially unsound, for who in the world can assert “‘his thoughts, words, and actions, are exempt from controul [*sic*]?’” (735).

These observations are exactly applicable to Cecilia's own situation in her frustrated efforts to find the measure of female independence and fulfilment through work. In noting Belfield's “‘various enterprises and struggles’” (737) she is in effect alluding to her own; and by expressing her hopes that he has now found “‘a project

¹⁰⁶ Cecilia's mixed response to Belfield, finding him simultaneously laudable and irresponsible, reflects Burney's essentially sympathetic treatment of his difficulties. Doody writes: ‘Eighteenth-century literature has no better or fuller picture of the economic, social, and mental confusion that rising by the talents can involve than the portrait of Belfield in *Cecilia*’, p. 131. She equates this with Burney's own situation.

¹⁰⁷ This carries through the appearance of Belfield as Don Quixote in the masquerade scene earlier in the novel.

which promises you so much satisfaction” (737) (that is, writing), she is acknowledging the rewards of self-dependence which she anticipates from her newly inaugurated schemes of charity. It is no coincidence that this scene precedes an update on the successful progress of the Hills and Cecilia’s new-structuring of a system of economy that will allow the full implementation of her benevolent intentions. What Cecilia has learnt from Belfield is the “full worth of steadiness and prudence”, which she “knew not [...] till I knew this young man” (740). In this she articulates the *moral* aspect of self-dependence, an essential adjunct to depending on one’s self economically. Although Cecilia, unlike Belfield, does not have to earn her living, her appropriate management of her fortune through charity work continues to draw on Belfield’s experiences at the level of meanings and helps her to refine her notions concerning the nature of independence.

Most critics of Burney agree that the ending of *Cecilia* ultimately demonstrates the impossibility of female independence within the prevailing ideology. As Belfield changes jobs again, ‘deceived’, ‘bewitched’, ‘infatuated’ by the ‘chimera’ of becoming a writer (882), Cecilia, too, is denied her work as her (publicly unacknowledged) marriage to Delvile deprives her of home, fortune and any right she feels she has to direct her own actions. Unable to sustain either her charity or her autonomy, she mentally capitulates to increasing emotional pressures and becomes temporarily mad. Epstein reads this as the only recourse under the relentless frustrations of powerlessness.¹⁰⁸ Cecilia is, thus, accorded only an ‘imperfect’ (941) happiness at the end in an otherwise fulfilling marriage to Delvile. Straub usefully sustains the connection between Belfield’s and Cecilia’s stories to suggest that their respective resolutions – Belfield returns to the army – relegate

¹⁰⁸ Epstein, *The Iron Pen*, p.168.

‘love and work to the genders respectively assumed to take the most interest in one or the other’.¹⁰⁹ While Belfield is promised a successful career, Cecilia is remunerated by love and marriage in the domestic sphere. The final word of the novel, noting Cecilia’s ‘resignation’ (albeit the ‘cheerfullest’) (941) accordingly places emphasis on this divergence.

Nevertheless, it seems significant that Cecilia does not abandon her charity work once married. Although deprived of her own fortune, she is bequeathed another by Mrs Delvile’s sister. This is left ‘to her sole disposal’ (939) and is approved of by Delvile, for whom it was originally intended, because it restores to her ‘part of that power and independence of which her generous and pure regard for himself had deprived her’ (939). Cecilia at once sends for Albany and resumes her ‘active benevolence’ (939). The Belfield and Cecilia strands are thus connected at another level, for just as Belfield resumes the work – in the army – that was his original starting-point, so Cecilia returns to the employment and conditions that were *hers*. Burney continues to structure these connections as part of an ideological, not just a formal dynamic. Belfield’s re-entering the army, an exclusively masculine profession, serves to emphasize the feminized occupations he has pursued hitherto – teaching, cottage-gardening, writing – and explains their value for Cecilia’s experiential decoding. At both the moral and the economic level, his persistent circumscription has proved a relevant symbol for Cecilia’s own experiences: Belfield’s ‘injudicious’ and ‘volatile’ (940) approach to employment has allowed Cecilia to correct ‘the error of profusion, even in charity and beneficence’ (939), which enables her to produce a more meaningful construction of work for herself. That this construction, as it pertains at the end of the novel,

¹⁰⁹ Straub, p.149.

relies on a borrowed fortune and is conducted from within the domestic enclosure of marriage underlines Burney's commitment to debating the ideological implications of women's work, for these restrictions demonstrate the economic and social limitations placed on women's access to determining work's register of meanings. Cecilia's persistence in engaging with the possibilities of these meanings, and their forms, shows the importance to women of exploring their lives in terms of independence and meaningful employment.

***Camilla*: In 'the half-way house'**

There was a fourteen-year gap between *Cecilia* and the publication of Burney's third novel *Camilla*.¹¹⁰ During this period Burney experienced for herself some of the vicissitudes of female employment, spending a difficult five years at court as second keeper of the robes to Queen Charlotte, to whom *Camilla* is dedicated. She also continued to write at court, producing three unperformed blank verse tragedies. The only work to reach the public arena between *Cecilia* and *Camilla* was her charity pamphlet, *Brief Reflections Relevant to the Emigrant French Clergy*, published in 1793.¹¹¹ Addressing herself to 'FEMALE BENEFICENCE', Burney exhorts 'the rights of charity' for the 'pious fugitives' and 'destitute wanderers' from the French Revolution.¹¹² Herself now married to an émigré Frenchman, Burney's charitable initiative clearly had its personal aspect, but it also reminds us that *Camilla* appeared in a decade marked by revolution and political radicalism. Mary Wollstonecraft had published *A Vindication of the Rights*

¹¹⁰ *Camilla*, edited by Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press (World's Classics), 1983). All references are cited in the text.

¹¹¹ See note 84. Doody claims that Burney, in effect, wrote another complete novel between *Cecilia* and *Camilla*, what she calls the ur-*Camilla*, or *Clarinda*. See Chapter 6 of her study of Burney.

¹¹² *Brief Reflections*, pages 4, 6 and 3 respectively.

of *Woman* in 1792 and *Camilla* appeared alongside radical female novels such as Mary Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* in 1796. Questions of female independence and of economic self-dependence for women were implicitly politicized by these developments.

Burney's subtitle for *Camilla*, 'A Picture of Youth', and the narrator's identification of the novel's theme as 'the wilder wonders of the Heart of man' (7) suggest a predominantly inward-looking, intimate sphere of interest, turning away from the sweep of external events. Indeed, the majority of Burney's recent critics defer a consideration of the French Revolution's influence on her work to discussions of *The Wanderer*, which, in any case, Burney specifically historicizes to that period. Zonitch's reading of *Camilla* as a feminine internalizing of the aggression and violence of a repressive, institutionalized culture to produce acts of female self-violation is thus placed in the context of Burney's court years, out of which, Zonitch argues, these themes developed.¹¹³

However, the novel's flux and instability, and the unsettling effect on the reader of engaging with its Gothic atmospheres of suppressed emotions, suggest Burney was responding to the political climate of the time. This emerges in *Camilla*'s preoccupation with fears and uncertainties as to what can, should and might be expressed, which finds a direct external counterpart in the increasingly repressive Pitt government of the 1790s. The motifs that operate here concern the technologies of surveillance. If Pitt's government was noted for its secret service of spying and elimination of radical activity, then Doody's description of *Camilla* as an 'enormous spy-story'¹¹⁴ involving observation and counterobservation suggests Burney was consciously engaging with tonal possibilities derived from the political

¹¹³ Zonitch, pp.85-112.

¹¹⁴ Doody, p.227.

climate. This is not to say that Burney had a political agenda in writing this novel; rather I concur with Zonitch that she continues to critique domestic ideology and the economic conditions that disadvantage women. Nevertheless, the operations of surveillance and the mechanisms of power inherent in its machinery are intensified in this novel, implicating women particularly because of their involvement with the processes of domestic supervision and self-regulation.¹¹⁵ Burney pursues this to, at times, overwhelming effect by drawing on the political atmosphere, as much as the social and economic. It is fitting, therefore, that Burney gives the central place in this novel to the family economy, for this unit's viability and survival in terms of the resources and work that its members bring to it are crucially nuanced by the climate in which it operates.

Camilla Tyrold is unusual amongst Burney's heroines in being part of an intact family unit, comprising her three siblings and both parents. The novel itself is unusual, too, in its depiction of the protagonist's childhood.¹¹⁶ Camilla is portrayed as a captivating child, 'playful', 'animated', 'spontaneous', but more worryingly for the requirements of the disciplinary domestic sphere, 'uncurbed' and 'untamed' (15). Her possessing 'an imagination that submitted to no control' is described as the 'reigning and radical defect of her character' (84). Although Camilla's principles are 'modelled by the pure and practical tenets of her exemplary parents' (52), it is the implications of this 'defect' that are painstakingly scrutinized in the novel. Both Camilla's parents and her suitor, Edgar Mandlebert, insist that she

¹¹⁵ This formulation derives from a Foucauldian perspective. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (Penguin Books, 1991).

¹¹⁶ Coral Ann Howells argues that *Camilla* reads like a response to Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in its sensitivity to childhood as a unique experience and its shared critique of educational values, with Burney demonstrating the impracticalities of Wollstonecraft's arguments. Howells has to rely on internal textual evidence rather than concrete proof that Burney had read Wollstonecraft's work at the time of writing *Camilla*. Coral Ann Howells, "'The proper education of a female...is still to seek': Childhood and Girls' Education in Fanny Burney's *Camilla; Or a Picture of Youth*", *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 7, 1984 pp.191-98.

regulate her imagination, exerting due management and control over her mental resources, and construe this as her designated contribution to the viability of the family economy (whether parental or marital). In other words, Camilla's work role within this economy is measured in terms of her psychological behaviour.

There is something inevitable, then, in Camilla's madness later in the novel. She hallucinates voices and visions that demand acknowledgment of her "miserable insufficiency" (875). Her madness denotes the failure of her psychological labour. Not only are her mental resources here beyond regulation or control, but the alienation of her mind represents the alienation of her work from a family economy which is itself in abeyance. Mr Tyrold is in prison for debt, her mother is absent, and in a clandestine visit to Cleves (her uncle's house) immediately prior to her mental collapse, Camilla finds the place empty, and concludes herself "an outcast [...] to my family" (860).¹¹⁷ Burney makes the location of Camilla's madness an inn 'called the half-way house' (859), an apposite metaphor for the suspended household economy which, in her own shared suspension between life and death, sanity and insanity, Camilla adjudges herself wholly responsible for dismantling. Her desire to be confined "to the hardest labour for the remnant of my miserable existence, so it might expiate but this guilty outrage!" (827) shows her need to find in a different form of work the means of atonement for failing at the work role allocated to her.

Camilla's sense of failure has been excoriatingly evoked throughout the preceding narrative. There is a consistently disciplinary dimension to the commentary on her conduct both in public and private, which finds its expression in two registers in particular, the financial and the supervisory. Thompson's reading of

¹¹⁷ This echoes Cecilia's position and foreshadows Juliet's in *The Wanderer*.

the novel as a ‘narrative of female disentanglement and debt’ notes the ‘remarkable detail’ in which Camilla’s financial indiscretions are recorded.¹¹⁸ This can be linked to the vision Camilla has in her madness of ‘the immense volumes of Eternity’ in which she must write her ““deserts”” (875), for this book stands as a vast ledger of guilt, measured in credit and debit. Burney’s evocation of the consumer and credit society which surrounds Camilla reinforces this and suggests that credit is a more important concept in the novel than debt as Thompson has it.¹¹⁹

Camilla’s early experience of being made the heiress of her uncle, Sir Hugh – an event designated in the narrative as ill-conceived, if not reckless – only to be shortly after disinherited in favour of her sister Eugenia emblemizes the elusive nature of money, the having and not having of credit transactions. Lionel Tyrold builds on this by wilfully obfuscating which of his sisters is Sir Hugh’s heiress, enjoying the marriage market speculations that ensue, whilst keeping the actual locus of the money concealed. In a third example, Burney shows Camilla’s ‘perplexity’ (106) when she wins a locket in a raffle, having authorized Edgar to get back the half guinea she originally paid to take part. She assumes the locket cannot be hers, ‘declaring it to be utterly impossible that the locket and the half guinea should belong to the same person’ (123). Edgar promises to return the locket to its ““rightful proprietor”” (123), but later reveals he did not redeem her pledge after all; the refunded half guinea was from his own pocket. After much demurring – Camilla wants to repay him either the money or the locket – he persuades her to retain both. Thus the financial world operates clandestinely: it is possible to be an heiress one

¹¹⁸ Thompson, *Models of Value*, pp.162 and 164. In addition, Epstein notes of the earlier *Cecilia* that it is ground-breaking for the eighteenth-century novel in the exactness of its financial detail. *The Iron Pen*, p.160.

¹¹⁹ Zonitch makes some useful comments on the implications of a consumer and credit society for women and suggests the novel can be read as a narrative of the heroine’s education in the meanings of credit. See *Familiar Violence*, pages 91 and 103-06.

moment, disinherited the next, yet still to retain one's fortune in the eyes of the world; and to have goods without payment, including lockets which arrive by mystery and chance and which one can keep along with one's money. This atmosphere of credit behaviour makes it ironic, then, that the same masculine authority requires women to practise their fit work of regulating their economic and moral conduct in an open and disciplined manner.

A recurrent motif in the novel is the importance of the individual's management of his or her resources. From the 'resources unfathomable' (7) that constitute the human heart to Dr Orkborne's philological work as 'a constant resource for himself' (31) and Eugenia's reaping the 'resources and reflexions' (912) of her education and virtues, Burney explores the negative and positive attributes of such resources, asking what constitutes their sufficiency to the individual and how best they are to be used. Camilla's resources, both mental and financial, become inextricably implicated in the credit economy she is exposed to, particularly during her stays at Tunbridge Wells and Southampton. Having been 'taught to spend sparingly upon herself' (93) and to practise charity and benevolence (the half guinea she redeemed from the raffle was to bestow on a prisoner's wife), she immediately overspends in the shops of Tunbridge, led on by inexperience and ignorance of the price of things. Abetted by Mrs Mittin, a kind of self-made gentlewoman who attaches herself to anyone she thinks will serve her turn, Camilla soon starts to spend beyond her means and leaves Tunbridge in debt.

Further aggravation occurs during a visit to Southampton. A 'thousand perversities' (736) results in the separation of Camilla and Edgar, while Camilla herself continues to spend money she does not have to procure goods that Mrs Mittin persuades her are essential to life in a public place. In detailing the

accumulation of commodities and debts and linking them to Camilla's 'state of accumulated distress' (736), Burney explicitly connects increasing disruptions to her heroine's economic and mental resources. These, too, take on the nature of credit transactions. The labour Camilla expends in trying to control her resources is directed to maintaining the viability of her contribution to the family economy. However, her self-reproach in 'receiving the goods, and benefiting from the labours of others, without speeding them their rights and their rewards' (744) leads her to conceal the extent of her resources' disarray and live "on the credit" of her family's belief in her willingness and ability to practise 'personal oeconomy' (767).

The increasing discrepancy between the economic and psychological behaviour she should be pursuing and the predicament in which she finds herself (including the arrangement she enters into with a money-lender) further disorders Camilla's resources. Her mother's announcement of her return from tending a sick relative in Lisbon, anticipating the virtues of family "exertions of practical oeconomy" and pleasurably claiming "my share in these labours" (790) reminds Camilla of how she has failed in her own allotted labour contribution. Her mental lethargy is noted by Mr Tyrold who sends her to London as "a stimulus to mental exertion", telling her when she returns, "your excellent Mother will aid your task, and reward its labour" (791). Camilla's work is thus structured in a way she knows is past recall; its contribution to the family economy inverted because she has "committed them [her family] clandestinely to a usurer!" (791)

It is fitting, therefore, that the chapter in which Camilla arrives at the half-way house where she descends into madness is titled 'A Last Resource'. The title is richly ambiguous. Although it could be applied to the house itself, or to Camilla's last bodily and mental efforts before her collapse, Burney also draws attention to

Camilla's last economic resource in her decision to use 'the locket of Edgar Mandlebert' (864) as security against payment of her bill. The landlord refuses the pledge, though he accepts her uncle's gold watch in its place. Despite his wife's objection, the landlord insists on retaining both, seeing 'no harm in it' (865), and this resonates with Camilla's earlier confusion about how both locket and half guinea could be hers when the former first came into her possession. Burney thus echoes the motifs of shadowy financial transactions and suspensions of payment by credit and security throughout the narrative. With all her own resources now in suspension, pledged to the family economy but appropriated by a public economy based on consumption and credit, there is an inevitability in Camilla's other 'Last Resource': madness.

Despite Camilla's belief that the punishments, hallucinatory or otherwise, that accrue to her are deserved, it is this inevitability rather than any justness in her madness that Burney portrays. The novel's register of disciplinary supervision suggests this, for it emphasizes the burden of proof placed on women's economic and moral conduct and equates that proof with conformity. Camilla becomes the object of a surveillance, which directs its mechanisms of power to gaining a hold over her body and training it in the correct habits and behaviour. Since one of its operations is to place individuals in a field of comparison with others, it is Camilla's 'mental anguish' (893) at her failure to conform not only 'to the pure principles in which she had been educated' (757), but to precepts of ethical female conduct as a whole that functions as her allotted punishment.

The psychological labour of women is here re-invoked, for in making Mr Tyrold and Edgar – her father and her future husband – the main watchers of Camilla, Burney links the surveillance of women to the roles designated for them in

the family economy. There is an irony in the fact that supervision is part of women's domestic work in that economy. If this irony is lost on Dr Marchmont as he exhorts his pupil Edgar to watch everything Camilla does and ask himself, "Should I like such behaviour in my wife?" (160), it is not lost on Burney, who uses the ambiguous relationship between male and female modes of surveillance to pursue the work theme in the novel. Just as Edgar is advised "Nothing must escape you" (160), so female domestic regulation requires constant vigilance and alertness to detail. Moreover, it is part of women's psychological labour to keep strict watch over themselves, to ensure responsible self-management. When Mr Tyrold considers it necessary to recall Camilla from her apparently unreciprocated feelings for Edgar, he demands her 'self-conquest', to 'struggle then against yourself' (358) and to use reflection 'to obtain a strict and unremitting control over your passions' (359). The 'future recompence' for these 'present exertions' (362) will be in the triumph of her delicacy. The language of fit labour and due remuneration is gendered here by the very nature of the work and wages involved. It is also noticeably conflictual and Burney suggests by this that where female work is measured within the field of surveillance, the "wages" it receives are invariably punitive.

Not only Edgar, but other characters too place Camilla under observation. She feels herself 'constantly watched' (198) by Miss Margland, seeks to avoid the 'scrutiny' (542) of her father, and experiences 'the shame of being watched and pitied by every servant in the house' (352). If 'the scrupulous, the scrutinising, the delicate Edgar' (553) is Camilla's most relentless watcher, the equally relentless awareness that she is *being* watched is presented as the most exacting part of the procedure. Burney uses sustained imagery of entrapment to convey this; it is

striking how often Camilla falters and suffocates in Edgar's presence, impelled towards windows in order to breathe more freely. In this way, the disciplinary aspect of surveillance is shown to be literally stifling her. At a metaphorical level, the internalizing of the gaze is its own trap and punishment, for it represents the conflict of attempting to correlate the masculine authority of its supervisory modes with the requirements of female domestic supervision. As in the financial register, Camilla is forced to learn the terms determining her contribution to the family economy from a dimension which is inappropriate for the instruction.

One more way Burney uses to explore this is through the realm of female charity. Unlike Cecilia, Camilla does not have a fortune, but she has been 'accustomed from her earliest childhood to attend to the indigent and unhappy' (83) and this is presented as tied to her work within the family economy. The frugality she practises 'that something might be always in her power to bestow upon others' (93) connects to the perception that, once married to Edgar, "'she'll go about, visiting the poor, and making them clothes, and broths, and wine possets, and baby-linen, all day long'" (574).¹²⁰ In short, she will fulfil the female work role of putting her time and her husband's fortune to appropriate charitable use. Yet Burney continues to emphasize Camilla's actions in terms of Edgar's surveillance, his 'glistening eyes' (83) denoting his watchful approval. Later he reflects that he has never seen her 'so lovely, as in scenes of active benevolence, or domestic life' (645). Thompson sees this as part of eroticizing Camilla's acts of charity. The appeal to Edgar lies in witnessing her moral responsiveness and warmth of heart.¹²¹ But, if charity is symbolic of female work, Edgar is also here observing the 'working woman' and examining her aptness for the role she must play in the

¹²⁰ These observations are made by Jacob, an old servant of Edgar's.

¹²¹ Thompson, p.164.

family economy.¹²² It is a quite natural – and essential – process for him to predicate her loveliness on connecting ‘active benevolence’ and ‘domestic life’. For Camilla, however, her instinctive benevolence becomes a test of approval under Edgar’s surveillance. Her financial mismanagement becomes doubly burdensome because of this, being both a failure of economic practice in itself and an inversion of the charitable model in which the erstwhile giver becomes a consumer, the bestower a debtor. The internalized gaze, drawn from Edgar’s supervisory tactics, leads Camilla to deny her own fitness for the role of domestic economist.

The half-way house, the scene of Camilla’s mental and physical collapse, becomes an important image again here. Its name denotes the suspension of all households at this point, and, hence, of all viable household economies. This section of the novel is filled with images of ‘half-way houses’: the depopulated, deserted Cleves, the broken-up parsonage at Etherington (Camilla’s paternal home) and the elusive Belfont, her sister’s home from which Camilla is debarred. These images combine to convince Camilla that, far from making her due contribution to the survival of the family economic unit, she has been its prime destroyer. For Burney, however, the concept of the half-way house becomes a metaphor for the ambiguities inherent in the domestic woman’s work role. Women’s work in managing their mental and economic resources to regulate self and household is irretrievably compromised, Burney argues, by the fact that their work is itself controlled as a resource by an ideology which exacts it from them as a due, but shifts the rules by which they can lay claim to it. Drawing on the atmospheres of the political, social and economic climate to suggest a conflictual, punitive and controlling attitude to the female role in the family economy, Burney thus uses the

¹²² Thompson discusses Edgar’s surveillance strategies in terms of a scientific discourse based on gathering and studying empirical evidence. See p.163 in particular. Zonitch also considers Burney’s use of scientific discourse to explore male investigative processes. See *Familiar Violence*, p.93.

image of the half-way house and the psychologically broken woman who inhabits it to stand as a grotesque version of the domestic ideal.

Burney continues to use the vigour of such images and ambiguities to suggest the problematic nature of female work roles in a wider sense, the theme that was to come to full prominence in her next novel. One site for this in *Camilla* is the shape-shifting figure of Mrs Mittin. This character is continually implicated in Camilla's accumulation of debts, being an avid consumer on behalf of and at the expense of others. She negotiates credit transactions, is collusive and clandestine in her dealings and has a predatory attitude to possessions. She is also, as Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace reminds us 'a working woman'.¹²³ Her employment history includes being 'the apprentice to a small country milliner', nursing a sick gentlewoman, acting as a companion and performing a range of domestic tasks ('work, read, go of errands, or cook a dinner' (688)). These resemble the kinds of employment Juliet experiences in *The Wanderer*, as do the 'dependence and hardships' (688) that go with them (and which Cecilia feared in *The Wivings*). The major difference is that Mrs Mittin is prepared to 'be a parasite, a spy, an attendant, a drudge [...] invent any expedient, and execute any scheme' (688) in order to survive economically and professionally.

What is intriguing about this is how Mrs Mittin's preparedness to show flexibility and adaptability in the work roles she performs brings her success and self-dependence. It is this kind of flexibility, as we saw earlier, that tended to characterize women's contribution to the family economy in this period. Although there is narratorial disapproval for Mrs Mittin, her flexibility is contrasted with the rigidity governing the work Camilla is expected to perform. Mrs Mittin's success

¹²³ Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, p.97. Kowaleski-Wallace offers an illuminating reading of Mrs Mittin and Camilla's visit to the Southampton shops and the gendered forms of consumer behaviour it constructs. See pp.92-98.

lies in negotiating the credit and surveillance technologies that defeat Camilla, while herself remaining immune from becoming their object. To this end, she is deliberately ambiguous about her status, first appearing as “‘a mere common person’” in ‘a large black bonnet, and a blue checked apron’ (423-24). Camilla is astonished when Mrs Mittin removes her apron to reveal ‘a white, muslin one, embroidered and flounced’ underneath and hears her aver, “‘I’m a gentlewoman!’” (424). Mrs Mittin’s ability to shift between these two guises further denotes the flexibility by which she markets her employable skills.

Later in the novel, Mrs Mittin reveals another secret, that “‘I’m called Mrs [...] because I’d a mind to be taken for a young widow, on account everybody likes a young widow’” (469). Her shrewd reading of the ways in which society values and rewards female status also allows her to manipulate work categories. The genteel widow means something different in the register of employment from the ‘mere common person’ and Mrs Mittin uses this to insinuate herself into the intimate domestic circles where she can most conveniently earn a living. It is only by trickery, disguise and the sacrifice of female delicacy that Mrs Mittin can achieve self-dependence. Yet, placed alongside the construction of work required of Camilla and its realisation, before the novel’s happy ending, in the half-way house of the grotesqued domestic ideal, Mrs Mittin’s command of attitudes to female work is shown as the more tenable position. It is by rendering this position as itself a form of half-way house, where Mrs Mittin’s poor woman-gentlewoman, single woman-widow shifts operate, that Burney questions the acceptability and usefulness of such formulations of work, whether psychological or practical, labouring or genteel. It was these ideas that continued to occupy Burney in her fourth novel, *The Wanderer*.

Unlikely as it seems, there are striking links between Mrs Mittin and Burney's final heroine, Juliet Granville. Making her first appearance disguised in shabby clothes and blackened face, Juliet's own metaphorical apron is removed to reveal a gentlewoman underneath. Like Mrs Mittin, she also makes ready shifts to adapt to any suitable employment, whilst concealing her marital status, even her name. The motives governing Juliet's expediency are not those of Mrs Mittin, however, and the closer links are to the high-minded, circumstantially unfortunate Belfield in *Cecilia*. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that through such characters Burney remained committed to exploring the relationships between gentility and employment and between moral and economic behaviour in the dimension of work. It is to *The Wanderer* that we must turn for the final working-through of these relationships; and for considering Burney's formulation of the meanings of independence, self-sufficiency and self-dependence as they relate to the theme of female work.

***The Wanderer*: 'Learning to suffice to herself'**

The Wanderer was published in 1814, the last novel Burney wrote.¹²⁴ It is set 'During the dire reign of the terrific Robespierre' (11), and the historical and political climate of the French Revolution permeates the narrative, informing both events and tone. Zonitch rightly calls it 'one of Burney's most distinctly political novels',¹²⁵ and Burney draws on the historical context to establish atmospheres of persecution and tyranny. Juliet Granville, the wanderer of the title, is potentially the most free of all Burney's heroines, actively pursuing self-dependence through work,

¹²⁴ The work was not well received by the critics (although the first edition of 3,500 copies sold out immediately). See Doody pp.333-35 for a concise history of its critical reception.

¹²⁵ Zonitch, p.113. Doody also calls it her 'most political' work, p.318.

but she is also the most threatened (and threatening). The novel shows how her economic agency and self-sufficiency seek to operate in a world committed to delimiting the turbulence of behaviour deemed revolutionary.

At the beginning of the novel, Juliet Granville joins a group of English people fleeing revolutionary France. As we later discover, she is escaping a husband who forced her into marriage in order to secure her fortune by threatening to send her guardian to the guillotine. Until she has news of her guardian's safety, Juliet cannot risk disclosing her status, her family, even her name.¹²⁶ But the news is delayed. In the doubly precarious position of being without male protection or ready money, Juliet must support herself until she can be restored to her rightful position. The novel anatomizes her attempts at self-dependence, showing the 'Female Difficulties' (the novel's subtitle) of maintaining economic and moral integrity in the face of relentless social chauvinism and the harsh demands of working life.

At a first impression, a number of factors connect Juliet to earlier Burney heroines. Like Evelina, she appears without the social, familial and economic props that denote successful genteel femininity. Like Cecilia, she is independently minded and determined to pursue a purposeful scheme of work (however differently construed those schemes might be). Like Camilla, she finds herself subjected to a sustained and persecutory surveillance which places her economic behaviour in a Gothic dimension of psychological extremis. Juliet's ambiguous status also, as noted, links her to characters like Mrs Mittin and Belfield. *The Wanderer* presents a female emphasis for Belfield's project of 'Labour with Independence'. Indeed, from the perspective of *The Wanderer*, Belfield's employment history increasingly takes

¹²⁶ In fact she is not called by her real name – Juliet Granville – until p.643, over two thirds of the way through the novel. Prior to this she is known to readers and *dramatis personae* alike by a succession of pseudonyms. For ease of reference, I have called her Juliet throughout this discussion.

on the characteristics of a private experiment in personal fulfilment. If Burney uses his story to emblemize how ideological constructions of work pertain to women, Juliet's experiences are the thing itself. She cannot afford ideological experimentation: her position is that of "a poor destitute Wanderer, in search of any species of subsistence!" (49). As such, Belfield's 'Labour with Independence' and Juliet's 'hope of self-dependence' based on 'a laborious support' (220) are assigned to distinctive fields of meaning.

Juliet's story shows her relying on 'such resources as she could find, independently, in herself' and is likened to that of 'a female Robinson Crusoe' (873). The first resources she draws on are her educational accomplishments. As well as her intellectual and moral qualities, these include musical expertise – she plays the harp with 'uncommon ability' (73) – and 'the useful and appropriate female accomplishment of needle-work' (78). Juliet's 'earnest desire' is to use these as a means 'to sustaining life by her own means' and she believes that, while her 'many accomplishments invited her industry', they also 'promised it success' (146).

It is in these early stages of Juliet's struggle for self-dependence that Burney inaugurates a major theme of the novel, the skewed relationship between abilities and opportunities. This was Belfield's problem too – *and* Cecilia's, whose charitable work was an attempt to express her talents as well as to do good. Like both these earlier Burney characters, Juliet is initially sanguine in her expectations. This is also reminiscent of Brooke's Maria Villiers, although Juliet is more realistic than Maria in acknowledging the difficulty of 'how to bring [her accomplishments] into use' (146). In this respect, she is closest to the newly widowed Sidney Bidulph and Burney's theme is in one sense a continuation of the long-standing concern with how few opportunities there were for genteel women compelled to work by

economic necessity. Juliet's options comprise becoming 'governess to some young lady' (147), giving musical instruction or 'in working at her needle' (219), all fairly standard in fiction – and reality – of this period.

However, Burney does more with the theme than any of these earlier examples. She begins by depicting the ways in which Juliet's use of her accomplishments is circumscribed. Her ambiguous status is a crucial factor here. Mrs Maple, in whose house Juliet initially lives, represents the prevalent attitude to those whose skills seem not to correspond with their station. Having heard Juliet (unawares) playing the harp and singing, she offensively demands, "And pray where might such a body as you learn these things? And what use can such a body want them for?" (75). Her words reveal a class agenda to disempower Juliet by depersonalizing her and by severing the gentility her abilities represent from the lowly status of one who has no claims to either. Such attitudes also defeat her plan to support herself by teaching the harp, for this narratorially approved scheme of 'owing independence to her own industry' (238) is rendered 'abortive' (275) by the vanity, jealousy and malicious conjectures of the ladies she instructs. Nor do her pupils pay their fees, so that Juliet is unable to meet her own bills. She is simultaneously in the position of Harrel's unpaid workmen in *Cecilia* and of having Camilla's incurred debts.

Many novels of the preceding decades typically end at the point where the circumscription of female accomplishments in the economic sphere has been fully tested and given way to domestic enclosure in marriage. However, *The Wanderer* takes this circumscription as the preliminary phase of its narrative. In having Juliet exclaim 'how insufficient [...] is a FEMALE to herself!' (275) and 'How few [...] how circumscribed, are the attainments of women!' (289) Burney is inaugurating,

not concluding, the debate about female work and self-dependence. The structures and discursive materials of this debate become the fictive components of the novel itself.¹²⁷ For many of the characters, Juliet *is* the debate. Her resistance to identification and classification provokes an uneasy tightening of the social fabric, rather like the activation of the immune system against a viral invader. Burney moves between these characters' attempts to contain Juliet's presence and her economic agency (the women condemn, the men try to seduce) and those who more consciously structure ideological debates in which Juliet's experiences are positioned.

One character in the latter category is Elinor Joddrel. Generally recognized as a Wollstonecraftian figure, Elinor passionately endorses the rights of women and the revolutionary principles of political and individual liberty. Against all rules of female decorum, she avows her love for the novel's hero, Albert Harleigh, and makes several highly public suicide attempts rather than see his evident attachment to Juliet come to fruition.¹²⁸ Harleigh and Juliet admire Elinor, but find her misguided; and this might be taken as Burney's view too. Indeed, Burney has to work hard to contain the plausibility of Elinor's role within the hyperbolic vocabulary and actions she assigns her. It is important that she do so, for Elinor's presence in the novel offers an oblique commentary on Juliet's story.

When Elinor avers "I am never so happy as in ranging without a guide" (68), the narrative implies that wandering is allied to independence. Elinor's later

¹²⁷ This was not a new technique for Burney, though it is more fully prosecuted in *The Wanderer* than elsewhere in the novels. Earlier examples include the debates between Monckton and Belfield on the nature of independence in *Cecilia* and, to a lesser extent, Dr Marchmont and Edgar's discussion in *Camilla*. Mr Tyrold's Sermon in the latter novel is another example.

¹²⁸ Doody points out the echoes of this in Emma Courtney's declaration to Augustus Harley in Mary Hays' novel, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796). She also notes the similarity of the male characters' names. This could imply Burney's intention to position her novel in relation to more radical texts, though the relationship remains a covert one.

flight is also linked to Juliet's flight from France and her escape to the countryside later in the novel. But if the independent actions of self-governing women is the connection here, Burney soon shows how different are the constructions of independence each woman recognizes. Elinor's exhortations to Juliet to "forget that you are a dawdling woman, to remember that you are an active human being" (397) when Juliet speaks of the difficulties of achieving economic self-dependence are as high-flown as they are impracticable. In fact, Elinor rarely offers practical help and her averral that she is 'independent alike in person, fortune, and mind' (196) gives the game away somewhat: the implication is that her independence is a luxury that her fortune enables her to afford.

The narrative of *The Wanderer* seeks to check the imaginative extremes of Elinor's radical independence by using the very heightening of the register in which the character is presented to convey the claims of moderation. Burney shows the merits in Elinor's views, but exposes the impracticalities that accompany them. Against Elinor, Harleigh represents a more measured view, describing himself as 'independent', but arguing 'there are ties from which we are never emancipated' (339). Yet Burney tests this stance too by examining the motives that contextualize his words. They occur as part of an appeal to Juliet to abandon her plan to give a public performance on the harp. Whilst reluctantly allowing that she may consider herself 'singularly independent' and 'accountable only to yourself for your conduct' (343), he ranges against this the powerful social claims of female propriety and privacy. Since Harleigh has by this stage avowed his attachment to Juliet, his motives are in part governed by his desire to oversee the conduct of a woman who may one day be his wife. However, as one of the few people to recognize Juliet as a gentlewoman, Harleigh is also implicated in the measures that prevent genteel

women from making their labour, and hence their self-dependence, out of their accomplishments.

Elinor and Harleigh's differing constructions of independence and what independent action should consist in are two strands in the novel's wider engagement with the meaning of independence and self-dependence. The question of the sufficiency or insufficiency of the individual stands alongside this and reveals Burney's technique of presenting the novel's ideological dimension by a reciprocal mapping of external structures on to individual modes of behaviour and experience. Juliet's plan for 'learning to suffice to herself' (228) is, as we have seen, gradually eroded from its hopeful beginnings. But the failure of this self-sufficient endeavour is attributed to the *insufficiency* of those who thwart it. Being capricious and self-absorbed, they neither seek out nor acknowledge the labour that procures them "ease" and "luxury", nor do they reward by prompt payment the industry that amuses "your dainty idleness, and insufficiency to yourselves" (325).¹²⁹

In her study of boredom, Patricia Meyer Spacks points out the connection between insufficiency and a lack of resources, arguing that eighteenth-century women of the middling sorts were particularly prone to boredom being 'entirely deprived [...] of meaningful occupation'.¹³⁰ The alternative work expected of these women in the form of regulating themselves and overseeing the successful functioning of the household economy is presented in a different form in *The Wanderer*. Women such as Mrs Maple, Mrs Ireton and Miss Arbe practise regulatory procedures based on persecution, indifference and intolerance. The effect is to place in clearer relief Juliet's determination for personal responsibility and active use of the resources available to her. It is the fact that these resources are

¹²⁹ The charges are made by Giles Arbe.

¹³⁰ Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Boredom: The Literary History of a State of Mind* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p.63.

those shared nominally, at the level of rank, with the women who persecute her that defeats her. Her display of self-sufficiency not only presents these women with notice of their own insufficiency, but it also compromises the integrity of resources not intended for economic use.

The second phase of Juliet's espousal of self-dependence through work begins when she enters into the employ of Miss Matson who runs a milliner's shop. Burney heightens Juliet's predicament by delineating female experience in the workplace. The commercial practices of the shop – the transactions between 'the insolent, vain, unfeeling buyer' and 'the subtle, plausible, over-reaching seller' (428) – offend Juliet's morality. She is also morally shocked to find how, along with her fellow workers, she is on display 'in an open shop' (448) and at the mercy of the male gaze. Doody points out that 'One of the first casualties of the life of an employee is independent morality';¹³¹ and as Burney shows, economic exigency erodes individual choice: with 'no other means of subsistence' (448), Juliet must comply with her own commodification. This eroticization of the workplace – Juliet is soon persecuted by the attentions of Sir Lyell Sycamore, who already has the seduction of another shop-girl in hand – connects female economic vulnerability with sexual vulnerability.¹³² In these middle sections of the novel, Burney is relentless in probing the many factors besetting the scope of female self-dependence and work.

From Miss Matson's, Juliet enters the employ of Mrs Hart, a mantua-maker. Having learnt from her preceding experience, she tenders her services on a daily basis and hopes this is again 'like an approach to the self-dependence, that she had so earnestly coveted' (451). Her construction of self-dependence is thus predicated

¹³¹ Doody, p.354.

¹³² Straub makes this point, p.207, describing the milliner's shop as a 'locus of contradiction between the ideology of middle-class femininity and women's economic powerlessness' p.208.

on retaining her freedom of action by directing her own economic behaviour. In this case her plan fails because her diligence and skill provoke the jealousy of 'her needle-sisterhood' (452). The continuing attentions of Sir Lyell Sycamore further diminish the choices available to Juliet. As long as her employment keeps her publicly accessible, she cannot avoid him. For this reason, Juliet seeks a form of domestic refuge by becoming companion to Mrs Ireton. Betty Rizzo accurately describes Juliet's new employer as 'perhaps the most closely anatomized tyrannical mistress of them all'.¹³³ Mrs Ireton humiliates, abuses and torments her employee-victim, drawing her authority to do so from a society that empowers privilege based on wealth, status and male-allegiance.

Whilst this episode sustains the fictive symmetry of Juliet's persecution by a tyrannical husband, himself embodying the arbitrary power of political persecution, Burney also uses it to probe further the nature of female employment. Working as a companion was one of the few options available to poor middle-class women, but the arrangement was liable to serve as no more than a display of the employer's power and the employee's vulnerability. This is certainly how Burney depicts it and it suggests that her intention is to make a statement about all female employment, for the experience is not new to Juliet. In addition, the moral cost of economic necessity is presented in the perception of the companion's role as that of a 'toad eater' (520) or 'professional parasite' (543). Giles Arbe describes her position as letting oneself out "at so much a year, to say nothing that you think; and to do nothing that you like" (521) and concludes it to be "but a very mean way of getting money" (521). Like Belfield, Juliet has assumed that her labour "promised

¹³³ Betty Rizzo, *Companions Without Vows*, p.60. There is a short but incisive discussion of tyrant and victim constructions in *The Wanderer*, pp.106-8. This is part of a chapter on Burney (Chapter 5 'Frances Burney and the Anatomy of Companionship', pp.83-111) which looks at the influence of relationships in Burney's family, her connection with Hester Thrale and her experiences at court in formulating her attitudes to companionship and (female) tyrannical behaviour.

me, at least, my mental freedom” (473). But her construction of self-dependence as thinking and acting for herself morally and economically is now attacked on both fronts.

In the event, ‘the indignities daily, nay hourly, more insufferable from Mrs Ireton’ (620) are just one of the reasons why Juliet flies this employ. She finds some respite in joining her childhood friend and fellow émigré from France, Gabriella, and working with her in the latter’s haberdasher’s shop. Juliet admires her friend for the ““calm courage”” that ““enables her to combat evil by labour, misery by industry!”” (636). However, Gabriella does not thrive economically by her industry, for ‘Unpractised in every species of business’ (623), she is duped at every turn. Once again, Burney alludes to the difficulties of female self-dependence where the means to opportunities and skills are denied. More particularly, in this section of the novel Burney explores a form of family economy and of the contributions women make to it by their work. Juliet and Gabriella form a partnership in which they organize a shop, ‘cast up their accounts’ and ‘where one served and waited upon customers, and the other aided the household economy by the industry of her needle’. The work is ‘laborious’, but the ‘manual toil’ is accompanied by ‘mental comfort’ (624).

This version of the household economy recalls historiographical constructions of the household as the essential unit for getting work done through the contribution of its members by making the most effective use of available resources. The female contribution was characterized by its diversity of paid and unpaid labour, while the overall economic tone of the household lay in its self-sufficient endeavour. In Burney’s version, Juliet and Gabriella’s ‘household economy’ (624) aims at this self-sufficiency. The resources are those that both

members contribute by means of their labour, which mixes shop-work and needlework, and which combines working at home and carrying out commissions outside the house. Burney emphasizes an extra contribution too in the emotional support the two women offer each other, by which, ‘every exertion [is] lightened, and every sorrow softened’ (624).

Yet Burney’s version also uses this all-female composition to illustrate the incipient non-viability of such a household economy. In part this suggests a concern for the vulnerability of all such household units in the economic and employment climate of the time. Gabriella’s poor business sense, due to her ‘utter inexperience’ (622) exposes the threat to the resources of the household by linking it to a more prevalent concern for female economic and employment opportunity. Furthermore, Burney presents this threat by linking it to the wider persecution of Juliet. Fearing the agents of her husband have discovered her whereabouts, Juliet tells Gabriella “‘I must fly, – instantly fly!’” (654). Not only is the household in which she has conjoined with Gabriella unable to protect or sustain her, but she is forced to withdraw from it her contribution of labour and resources. The self-sufficient project is broken from within and without. Burney marks this by eschewing, for the second time in the novel, the point at which conventionally the narrative might be expected to conclude, namely in the establishment of a newly-implemented household economy. By breaking up the Gabriella-Juliet unit, Burney seeks to address, not the desirability but the causes of its fragility and failure.¹³⁴ To this end, it precipitates the final stages of the novel where Juliet is shown at her most indigent and isolated and her resourcefulness receives its most distinctive test.

¹³⁴ Sarah Fielding did a similar thing in breaking up the ‘happy family’ unit in *David Simple: Volume the Last*. See Chapter One.

From London, Juliet flees to the countryside and finds herself amongst rural working communities around Salisbury and, later, the New Forest. Her genteel accomplishments are of no use to her in this environment, nor is any overt appearance of gentility. She realises the importance of dressing as a working-woman, for a ‘coarse bonnet, and blue apron saved her from peculiar remark’ (667). Nevertheless, she finds herself attracting the unwanted familiarities of the men she encounters. Burney uses this to sustain the sense of danger besetting the economically unprotected female.¹³⁵ Juliet’s wanderings from place to place and lodging to lodging, seeking a period of secure respite, are fully expressed in her cry of ‘Alas! [...] is it only under the domestic roof, – that roof to me denied! – that woman can know safety, respect, and honour?’ (666).

Juliet’s project of self-dependence receives less explicit attention in this section of the novel, where Burney presents the work experiences of the labouring poor as the context of Juliet’s struggle for personal safety. Her own work consists in making herself useful in whatever way she can at her different lodging places. While staying with the farmer, Simmers, she helps ‘the young women of the farm, in various of the lighter domestic offices that fell to their share’ (695). At another house she ‘dedicated her time to the service of the mother’, officiating ‘as nurse to the children’ and using ‘her industry and adroitness [to] put their whole little wardrobe in order’ (709). Increasingly, however, it is the nature of work itself that comes to the fore; Burney uses both the detachment of the narrator and the more reflective personalized perspective of Juliet’s viewpoint to develop a discursive and ideological treatment of work’s meanings. This ranges from the polemical to the

¹³⁵ This is a strand Burney emblematically develops in an artistically unsuccessful sub-plot involving conspiracy and poaching.

meditative and is inaugurated by Juliet's growing alertness to the kinds of female work experience around her and the survival tactics they entail.

An encounter with Margery Fairfield, whose husband gets his living from the forest, gives Juliet an early glimpse into the labouring woman's life. No matter her own work, nor how 'heavily laden' she is, Dame Fairfield has to take her children with her, 'for her husband was at work all day, and there was nobody to take care of them in her absence' (659). Juliet also watches 'market-women' bringing their 'butter, eggs, and poultry' to sell (666); observes the tasks within rural households, with women 'preparing their meals, or cleaning their platters, and feeding their poultry, rabbits, or pigs' (668); and notes the contribution of older women, such as the 'ancient dame' she sees 'spinning at the door of a cottage' (669). It is on Simmers' farm, where the young women have their 'several labours of weeding, churning, or washing' (693), that Juliet's more conscious attention to such work emerges most prominently: we are told she is 'not sorry to learn what were their occupations' (693). This is presented as a collation of evidence, along with her own earlier experiences, that enables her to understand more fully the causes of her predicament, for she concludes 'that a dearth of useful resources, was a principal cause, in adversity, of FEMALE DIFFICULTIES' (693).

Both Doody and Zonitch have discovered in *The Wanderer* a concern with the nature of work that goes beyond the central character's problems. Thus, Zonitch finds women's labour to be presented as a form of cruelty, arguing that by limiting women to 'physically and emotionally taxing jobs, their society finds a way to continue to control and abuse them'.¹³⁶ Doody's argument goes beyond an exclusively gendered view to show Burney uncovering what 'drudgery, monotony,

¹³⁶ Zonitch, p. 124.

and lack of stimulation are' and what consequences they bear for the labouring poor.¹³⁷ Juliet's observation of the workers and forms of work around her leads her to conclude 'the fallacy, alike in authors and in the world, of judging solely by theory' (700). Rural life – and work – is not a 'shepherd's paradise' (700), but a place of toil, where 'the wide spreading beauties of the landscape, charm not the labourer' (701). Rising to something of a peroration, Juliet puts the case of the 'peasants' by addressing the theoreticians: 'were ye to toil with them but one week! to rise as they rise, feed as they feed, and work as they work! like mine, then, your eyes would open' (701). Doody suggests that Burney's concern was, hence, with the larger question of human rights, of which 'woman's economic needs' are a part.¹³⁸ But the narrative's ideological imperatives at this point are expressed from within a fictive economy that Burney continues to tincture as feminine; not only in terms of the protagonist's viewpoint that channels these ideas, but in the fact that Juliet's closest observation is predominantly (though not exclusively) of the female workers with whom she associates.

The question of independence through work continues to resonate through these last stages of the novel. In effect, Burney is revisiting the claims Belfield made over thirty years earlier to 'Labour with Independence' and testing them anew from a female perspective.¹³⁹ Belfield found himself unsuited to the drudgery of labour by his education and habits, but remained committed to his project of independence. His emphasis fell less on the burden of such work on the labouring poor and more on the effects on him personally. Unused to work so "rough, coarse and laborious" (*Cecilia* 739), because of his mental and bodily refinement, he

¹³⁷ Doody, p.360.

¹³⁸ Doody, p.360.

¹³⁹ The fact that *The Wanderer* is historicized to the early 1790s suggests a form of temporal proximity between Belfield's experiences and Juliet's, in a fictive sense at least.

found it “‘levelled [him] with a brute’” (*Cecilia* 738). *The Wanderer* clearly develops this individualized response to labour by delving more thoroughly into the impact it has on the workers involved. Juliet may not share Belfield’s ‘hands on’ experience of working the land, but her observations of those who do are well considered and, although like him ‘she sought vainly to content herself with their uncultured society’, she nevertheless recognizes their ‘active and useful lives’ (699). She also, as we have seen, recognizes the hardship in such lives and, while *Cecilia* has its own strategies for delineating the failure of Belfield’s project of ‘Labour with Independence’, *The Wanderer* repositions this conceptual phrasing in Juliet’s description of the working poor’s experience as ‘labour without sustenance’ (701).

The extent to which Burney’s version of working experience in *The Wanderer* draws on contemporary developments is debatable. The so-called ‘pessimist’ strand within eighteenth-century social and economic historiography might see in her vision a working-through of the decreasing availability for women of employment and economic opportunities as a result of industrialization. Juliet’s earlier plight would thus go beyond the specific problems of economically necessitous female gentility to symbolize the de-skilling of all female labour and the attendant reduction in income-producing options. It might also be argued that the later stages of the novel, in producing an unreconstructed version of rural labour without benefit of mechanization, is a comment on the moribundity of attitudes to female work and women’s economic needs, showing them resistant to change and indeed resulting in ‘labour without sustenance’ (mental or economic).¹⁴⁰

From *Evelina*’s testing of the visibility of genteel women’s occupations to *Cecilia*’s

¹⁴⁰ The New Forest’s isolation is driven by plot imperatives too, since it highlights Juliet’s diminishing options in seeking a place of refuge. Of course, its very isolation also provides a strong reason why mechanization had not yet reached it.

quest for meaningful employment in her charitable work; from Camilla's contribution of psychological labour to the family economy to Juliet's efforts to achieve self-dependence through work, Burney's examination of the contexts, possibilities – and circumscription – of women's employment would thus represent a forty-year continuum of attitudinal stasis in the face of historical change; a reading that would make *The Wanderer*'s periodizing to twenty years earlier than its date of publication a mordant instance of Burneyan irony.

However, Burney's work always demands that her fictive economy be taken as a whole. In her handling of the interconnections between technique, theme and ideology, the novels reveal their differences by means of tone. The consistency of themes such as work and self-dependence are thus explored in different registers. In *Cecilia*, the failure of Belfield's 'Labour with Independence' scheme is personalized to the register of the educated male. The slippage of the 'Labour' and elevation of the 'Independence' component is marked in the debate between Belfield and Monckton on what independence is. The context and tone are overtly masculine, while the female presence – Cecilia – is relegated to silent listener, though as Burney shows, both work and independence are concepts equally crucial to her. *Cecilia*'s obliqueness in addressing the realities of female work and self-dependence through Belfield's experiences and Cecilia's charitable schemes is *made* tonally grotesque. in *Camilla*, where the political and economic climate finds expression in a gothicized atmosphere of surveillance and persecution. This novel thus appears as a crucial transition to the historicized tonality of *The Wanderer*.

Such tonal shifts allow a means of positioning Burney's deployment of the concepts of independence, self-dependence and self-sufficiency. Although they are used interchangeably, these terms nevertheless carry nuances of meaning and

application. Belfield's definition of independence as a kind of social and economic equilibrium is also depicted inasmuch as it *reflects his state of mind*.¹⁴¹ The Belfield-Monckton debate is radicalized in *The Wanderer* in the arguments between Harleigh and Elinor, in which the latter scorns "mere cowardly conformity" (154), asserting her right to think and act for herself. Tones, contexts (and informing discourses) may vary, as may the individual's idea of what his or her thoughts and actions will consist in, but the equation between independence and autonomous behaviour is a definitional given. Although Burney herself makes no explicit or consistent distinction between independence and self-dependence as terms, the latter is used in her works to suggest a more practical aspect of autonomous behaviour, one that is linked to an individual's economic enterprise. Characters who use the term – most notably Cecilia and Beaufort in *The Wiltshires* and Juliet in *The Wanderer* – do so to refer to an intention to provide for themselves through their efforts in the dimension of work. Dependence on self and dependence on others are crucially distinguished. Self-dependence is always depicted as a positive endeavour and its economic project is linked to the individual's moral and psychological well-being. This reliance on self, the strategies it entails in identifying and making use of available resources, and the moral and economic autonomy it seeks to attain to, equate Burney's concept of self-dependence with our modern idea of self-sufficiency.

The Wanderer's treatment of self-sufficiency is both tonal and conceptual. Its presence emerges in vocabulary, such as Juliet's avowed commitment to 'learning to suffice to herself' (228). Its spheres of meaning are economic, as here, as well as personal. During a period of respite in the New Forest, Juliet enjoys a

¹⁴¹ What Belfield says is, "I hold that man [...] to be independent, who treats the Great as the Little and the Little as the Great, who neither exults in riches nor blushes in poverty, who owes no man a groat, and who spends not a shilling he has not earned" (*Cecilia*, pp. 735-36).

sense of peace in which ‘she had no void, no want; her mind was sufficient to itself’ (676). This explicit phraseology links to self-sufficiency’s thematic and conceptual representation, for example in the metaphor of Juliet as ‘a female Robinson Crusoe’ (873). The symbolic resonances here allude to isolation, self-reliance and the struggle against adversity – personal and circumstantial – for survival. It is a reference, too, to the individual’s use of the resources, be they material, intellectual, moral or psychological, available to him or her. Although Burney’s novel is a substantial commentary on the limitations surrounding the availability and successful implementation of such resources for women, Juliet’s endeavours to achieve subsistence, though ‘cast upon herself’ (873), are consistently valorized. Her enterprise is always self-sufficient in tone and texture.

Finally, the novel connects the question of resources, female self-dependence and work within the historical atmosphere of the French Revolution. Sir Jaspar Herrington, an essentially well-meaning, though whimsical and self-willed old bachelor, asks Gabriella why she is working in a haberdasher’s shop when she is clearly “‘not precisely brought up to be a shop-keeper’”. He sees in her position the jarring juxtapositions of “‘high birth’” and “‘low life’”; “‘superiour [*sic*] rank with vulgar employment; and grace, taste, and politeness with common *drudgery*’” (638). Gabriella responds that the Revolution has produced “‘an equality not alone of mental sufferings, but of manual exertions’” (639). She, along with others of the French nobility, now make “‘willing efforts’” and “‘even glad toil’” to achieve “‘a laborious maintenance’” that has “‘but simple existence’” as its goal (639).

Thus, each individual project of self-dependence, including Juliet’s, is lent a wider contextual arena by Gabriella’s averral that “‘self-exertion can only mark

nobility of soul; and that self-dependence can only sustain honour in adversity”

(639). Burney draws on the historical atmosphere and roots it in the female workplace in which this conversation occurs. This is the novel’s true juxtaposition – the sphere of female employment and the tone of the climate beyond – and it clearly has its effect on Sir Jaspar. With a response ‘mingling reverence with amazement’, he declares ““I begin to suspect that I came into the world only this morning!””

(639). Gabriella has taught him something new about female resourcefulness and the nature of work and self-dependence. This is a significant moment, for as a representative of entrenched male aristocracy (Burney symbolically draws attention to his age and infirmities), Sir Jaspar is implicated in the attitudes that treat female economic agency as a threat. It is by such means that Burney, in a project sustained across her novels, enquires into the nature of female work, using it to demonstrate that there is an economic and moral dignity, which should be recognized, in female self-sufficiency.

Conclusion

The preceding chapters have sought to articulate a particularized account of female economic experience in the woman's novel of 1740 – 1814. The behaviours and expectations revealed are suggestive of a specific and instrumental rendering of the relationship between moral and economic modes of femininity within contemporary discourse. By using the concept of self-sufficiency to foreground these, I have been able to re-examine some significant critical themes, not least the problematical one for eighteenth-century female writers and modern literary critics and historians alike of how money as the instrument of political economy can be represented in the sentimental discourse of the novel. My readings suggest that women were far more ready to articulate their economic experiences and use the imaginative resources of fiction writing to structure debates concerning these than has often been allowed.

At the same time, my examination of what female self-sufficiency could mean in this period has highlighted the nature of some of these debates. Of central importance here is the figure whom I designate in the thesis as 'the female oeconomist'. Her presence in a range of economic structures – financial, personal, moral and domestic – along with the procedures by which she regulates those structures reveal some suggestive readings of how women can be positioned in relation to the political economy as a whole. Implicated in these debates are the instrumental processes whereby the concept of economy is feminized in order to reclaim it from an historically political and masculine usage. This has allowed my readings to participate in arguments concerning the scope and limitations of

women's public and private economic experiences and to suggest that cultural constructions of economic femininity lose some of their robustness alongside representations of lived experience, whether socio-historical or fictive.

The modelling of self-sufficiency which my thesis undertakes as part of its conceptual and critical project has attempted to synthesize analytical and historical structures in both its formulation and application. Whilst it might be argued that the model is incomplete in that it engages only implicitly, first with masculine forms of economic behaviour and, secondly, with a more overtly radicalized reading of economy, nevertheless it has allowed some useful conceptual moves in analyzing female self-sufficiency. This has involved using the term's definitional scope to reassess the acculturation procedures by which both prescriptive and independent modes of female economic behaviour are posited. My readings have sought to demonstrate that women actively engaged with this anomaly, adapting their economic behaviour, whether public or private, in line with the historical changes constituted by the emergent political economy. This, I have argued, is the very essence of female self-sufficiency in this period.

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